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## **THE MENDING OF LIFE**

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Transcribed and Edited from the recently  
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By the

Rev. DUNDAS HARFORD, M.A.

Vicar of Emmanuel, West End, Hampstead

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# THE MENDING OF LIFE

BEING AN ANONYMOUS VERSION  
OF ABOUT A.D. 1490 FROM THE

## DE EMENDATIONE VITAE OF RICHARD ROLLE OF HAMPOLE

EDITED IN A MODERNISED FORM  
FROM THE CAMBRIDGE MS. Ff. v. 42  
(now first published)

WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

BY

DUNDAS HARFORD

LONDON: H. R. ALLENSON, LIMITED  
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1913

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As given in the Latin Edition of the  
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# INTRODUCTION

## I. THE WRITER

RICHARD ROLLE of Hampole is slowly coming back into his own.

In the fifteenth century he was probably the most popular and widely-read of all English religious writers. Between sixty and seventy manuscript copies of the "*Emendatio Vitae*" alone, to say nothing of his other works, have survived to our own day; and that treatise enjoyed the unique distinction of being translated into no fewer than five separate versions in the vernacular. Of Thomas à Kempis' complete "*Imitation*" in four books there remain in England only five MS. copies in Latin and one in Greek; of the "*Musica Ecclesiastica*" type of the "*Imitation*" in three books there are

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nine copies known in Latin and three in English; while four other MSS. contain one or two books each. In all, that amounts to no more than twenty-two or twenty-three MSS. known.<sup>1</sup>

How then did Rolle's treatise fall from its place of honour? Two reasons may be assigned. In the first place his writings seem to have fallen into disfavour with the orthodox, because they became associated with "yvel men of lollardry."<sup>2</sup> In the second place, by the time that printing came in, the mystical wave had spent itself, following the normal course, and religion was sinking to the lower level of theological controversy. The Reformers were not

<sup>1</sup> See W. A. Copinger, "Bibliographiana," No. 3. —Of the English Translations of the "Imitatio Christi," Manchester, 1900. See also J. E. G. de Montmorency, "Thomas à Kempis, his Age and Book."

<sup>2</sup> See H. R. Bramley, "The Psalter by Richard Rolle," p. 2.

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so strong in "the mystical element of religion" as in the "institutional" and the "intellectual." They laid more stress on Justification by Faith than on Sanctification by Faith. The demand at that period for mystical literature was not large. Still, several printed editions of the "*De Emendatione Vitae*" were issued, as may be seen on p. lii. These, however, do not seem to have attained any great popularity, and the name and fame of the holy hermit seem to have become forgotten.

But Maeterlinck has laid down a principle of which we have here a striking confirmation,—"*Une œuvre ne vieillit qu'en proportion de son anti-mysticisme.*" Mystical works have in them a deathless energy, a sort of radioactive force, which has only to be brought to bear upon responsive minds and hearts, and the latent power is called out. So now once more the writings of

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Rolle are, through a variety of causes, being brought out into the light, and making again their ancient appeal. Partly, the growing interest in the mystics has prepared a public to appreciate his life and teachings. Partly the developing study of mediæval English has led to the publication in the vernacular of some of his writings, whether originally written in English, or translated by himself or others from his Latin originals. Partly, a widening band of scholars,—English, American, and German,—have been attracted to his writings, and are making them known and accessible. Also it may not be out of place to mention the aid afforded by the "Times Book Club," which in the year 1906 "remaindered" an edition of Rolle's English works in two volumes by Professor Carl Horstman, and caused a wide diffusion of this monumental work for a merely nominal sum. Horstman's

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work may have many faults, but at least his industry and accuracy as a copyist are worthy of all admiration, and readers of Rolle owe him ungrudging thanks for rendering accessible to them so many of his writings, and for setting them on the track of so many more. There is a tantalising note at the foot of p. xxxvi in the Introduction to the second volume : " These Latin works I have collected, and shall publish them in one of the next volumes." Is there any hope that this prospect should ever be fulfilled ?

In any case a wider knowledge of Rolle and his works is gradually emerging, of which the reader may be glad to have some brief account given, drawn from the original sources. These are mainly two : (i) The " *Officium de Sancto Ricardo de Hampole*," published by the Early English Text Society, original series, vol. 20 ; and in a better form by

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the Surtees Society, as an appendix to "The York Breviary" (No. 75): see also an edition annotated by Henry Bradshaw, among the MSS. of the Cambridge University Library. (ii) The autobiographical parts of several of Rolle's writings, especially the "*Incendium Amoris*," and the "*Melum Contemplativorum*,"—from which extracts are given by Horstman in his Introductions.

From these sources the following sketch of his life may be given.

Richard Rolle was born about the year 1300 at Thornton in Yorkshire. The point is in controversy whether this was Thornton-le-Dale, — "*juxta Pikering*," as some one has added in the margin of one of the MSS. of the "*Vita*," —or Thornton-le-Street, between Thirsk and Northallerton, five or six miles from the village of Topcliffe. It has been conjectured by the Rev. H. R. Bramley,

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editor of Rolle's Prose Psalter, that it was at Topcliffe Church that the earliest scenes in his hermit life took place. In the neighbourhood is a poor little hamlet called Dalton, but no present signs of any manor-house. The manor-house of Topcliffe can scarcely have belonged to the Daltons, for there is a superb contemporary brass in the chancel of the parish church, with full-length effigies of John de Topcliffe and his wife, who must have been the lord and lady of that manor. However, it is an attractive theory, and one would fain cling to the idea that that church, standing so picturesquely above the bridge over the river Swale, was the one in which those moving scenes took place in the life of the hermit novice. (See p. lvi.)

But we are anticipating. After his school-days\* the young Richard was sent up to Oxford at the expense of Arch-deacon Nevile of Durham. Here we



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are told that "he desired more fully and more deeply to be imbued with the theological doctrines of Holy Scripture than with physics or with discipline of secular science." He found there two streams of teaching and influence. The main stream flowed from the deep current of Scholasticism, especially under the influence of Duns Scotus, who had only been dead some ten years. There was, however, another stream finding its way through the centres of religious teaching and life in England, and indeed throughout Europe. It took its rise mainly in France, though other nations contributed to it. The main movers of this mystical reaction against the dry dialectics of the Schoolmen were three—(1) the "Victorine School," including Hugh, Richard, and Adam of St Victor, who flourished for the greater part of the twelfth century; (2) St Bernard of Clairvaux, the great Cistercian saint,

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preacher, and writer during the first half of that century; and (8) St Bonaventura, the "Doctor Seraphicus," who taught and wrote at Paris and elsewhere on the way and the joy of the contemplative life.

At the end of the thirteenth and beginning of the fourteenth century this mystical impulse made its hallowing influence felt over Dante in Italy, over the Friends of God in Germany, and made the fourteenth century to be, in the words of Miss Evelyn Underhill, "the classic moment for the spiritual history of our race." In England it produced the great group of mystical writers of whom Richard Rolle came to be the most influential, while perhaps the most attractive was Lady Julian of Norwich.

We have now to trace the "Mystic Way" as it developed itself in Rolle's personality. And here a preliminary remark may be thrown out, which the

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writer hopes to develop more fully on a later occasion. Modern psychology lays stress upon the working of the sub-conscious mind,—how the subliminal self becomes the storehouse of impressions and experiences which gradually prepare for the emergence of some new factor upon the conscious plane; and it is shown how frequently this takes place suddenly, through what is sometimes called a “subliminal uprush.” Now the same process may be observed in the development of the *corporate* consciousness,—in nations or in groups of persons. And constantly this may be seen to be focussed in a typical individual. A mental or spiritual movement spreads, almost unconsciously, through the corporate body, until the forces are ripe for birth; there in the typical person the subliminal influences spring up,—the man experiences some great expansion, and from

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that experience the movement really dates.

So was it in the present case. As upon the continent the floating tendencies towards a complete realisation of union with God focussed themselves at about this period in a Tauler or a Suso, a Ruysbroek or a Gerard Groot, so here in England the typical realisation took place in Richard Rolle.

It will not be necessary to detail at length the outward steps in that singularly romantic development. They have been often retold of late. The need rather is to emphasise the inner significance of the strange outward facts, and to relate them to the normal steps of the mystical ascent. It is not maintained that these stages were mutually exclusive, nor that they were contained in watertight compartments; but that they represented real experiences, and that the man after each step was

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something that he had not been before it.

When the door of the blast furnace is opened a molten mass rushes out, and in the prepared channels lies and cools ; but it *is* something that it *was not* before : when it went into the furnace, it was iron ore ; when it came out, it was iron. When the iron is put into the Bessemer retort, and melted afresh, it comes out steel. When the steel is subjected to a still more intense heat, and then plunged into water, it becomes tempered to certain degrees of hardness, as the artificer requires. This may illustrate the Divine side of the process which from the human side has been described as a “subliminal uprush.” The process is Divine throughout, working through psychological laws set in action by the will of God. The action from without meets the preparation from within, and changes take place.

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It would seem that Rolle himself recognised four, or perhaps five, such steps or stages in his spiritual life. They are given by him in a condensed form in the "Incendium Amoris," Book I., chapter 20, as numbered by the editor of Misyn's version (E.E.T.S., orig. ser., No. 106, p. 46). In the MS. copies the prologue is not counted as a chapter, so that the extract in question comes in chapter 19. Horstman gives the Latin in a footnote to vol. ii. p. vii: he does not give his MS. authority, but the passage may be quoted here as he gives it. "Cum homo ad Christum perfecte conversus cuncta transitoria despexerit et se in solo Conditoris desiderio immobiliter fixerit, tunc, vires viriliter exerceat, primo quasi aperto coelo superos cives oculo intellectuali conspiciat, et postea calorem suavissimum quasi ignem ardentem sentit, deinde mira suavitate im-

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buitur, et deinceps in canoro iubilo gloriatur.”

This account harmonises thoroughly with other descriptions of his own experience given in the “Incendium,” and with the order of inward development laid down in the “Mending of Life.” It should be noted that he here seems to regard this “ladder” as the normal order of events in the ascent to “Perfect Living.” It may be worth while to linger over this series of steps, for they form a main element in Rolle’s contribution to the “human documents” which the mystics have left behind. Five stages may here be tabulated :—

i. *Conversion.* “When a man has turned (or been converted) perfectly to Christ, and despised all transitory things, and stablished himself immovably in the sole desire of his Creator.” This seems to agree with Rolle’s “first degree of love, called Insuperable.” It is the

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human side of the turning to God,—the cutting adrift from the world, repenting and believing. He himself in the short narrative given in Lection VII. of the "Officium" makes it clear that he means by his conversion his leaving Oxford and taking to the hermit life in the neighbourhood of his old home. "When I had formed a single-hearted resolution, and had laid aside the secular habit, and determined to serve God rather than man, it happened one night *at the beginning of my conversion*" (in principio conversionis mee; see "The York Breviary," vol. ii. column 797: also in Perry's Preface, p. xxiii). The picturesque details of that change in his life should be read in the Lections of the Office,—how he formed for himself a sort of hermit's costume from two dresses of his sister's, how he then fled to the woods, how he came in contact with the family of John de Dalton, how



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he persuaded that gentleman both of his sanity and his sanctity, and how he was provided with a cell, and with the means of subsistence, on his estate. The present editor hopes at a future date, should time allow, to publish this document for English readers. Meantime, what is immediately important is to trace the further stages of his inner life.

ii. *Purgation*. For three years all but three or four months, according to the precise account in chapter xvi. of the "Incendium" (Misyn, pp. 85, 86), he lived the ascetic life of the solitary hermit. No details are given in that passage as to this stage. The Office says:—"So then he began with all diligence day and night to apply himself to the perfecting of life, and in every way that he could to advance in the contemplative life and to burn in the Divine love" (Lecture IV.). It may perhaps be said that this period was occupied in such a manner

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of life as he lays down for beginners in the first nine chapters of the "**Mending of Life.**" In the opening of chapter x., "**De Puritate Mentis,**" he says:—"Be these nyne degres that I haue touchede we styen up to purite and clennes of the soule be the qweche God is knowe." The Latin reads, "*qua videtur Deus,*" obviously referring to the Beatitude, and seems to lead up naturally to the next stage,—

iii. *The opening of the heavenly door.* "First, as it were heaven being opened, he beholds with the eye of the mind the citizens on high." In the "**Incendium**" he puts it thus:—" . . . usque ad apertionem hostii celestis ut revelata facie oculus cordis superos contempleretur . . ." The phrase seems to be based upon the Vulgate of 2 Cor. iii. 18, "**Nos vero omnes, revelata facie gloriam Domini speculantes,**" together with Rev. iv. 1, "**Post haec vidi, et ecce**

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ostium apertum in caelo." The experiences and expressions of those two primary Christian mystics, St Paul and St John, seem to be reproduced, and a fresh fulfilment of the mystical promise of a Greater than either is claimed, "Amen, amen dico vobis, videbitis caelum apertum, et angelos Dei ascendentes et descendentes supra Filium hominis" (John i. 51).

Was this the entering upon the stage of "Contemplation" technically so called? Horstman takes it so (vol. ii. p. vii). On the other hand, it is obvious that Rolle only regarded it as a preliminary stage, lasting nearly a year, and then leading to something higher. It seems more in accordance with usage to call this the entrance upon the Illuminative period,—in his own favourite phrase, "the second degree of love, called Inseparable." And even the next step mentioned in the Summary we are

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considering might be included within that category, or else regarded as the earlier stage of the Unitive period.

iv. *Fire of Love.* "And afterwards he feels a most sweet warmth as of burning fire." Perhaps the most characteristic note of Rolle's individuality was the quasi-physical nature of his spiritual perceptions. When he had once passed the gateway that leads into the higher mystical life, he went through two subsequent experiences, each of which produced upon him a semi-physical impression, while they were both, as it would seem, accompanied by a third impression of the same kind. The first of those experiences was that of "fire." He describes it in these words:—"I was sitting in a certain chapel, and while I was much enjoying the sweetness of prayer and meditation, suddenly I felt within me an unaccustomed and delightful warmth."

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So vivid was this sensation that he put his hand to his breast, to feel whether anything there had caught fire. Soon he found that it was from within and not from without that the heat was caused ; and he rejoiced at the gift of his Creator, —the gift of “that fire of love.” With this “merry heat,” as Misyn calls it, there came also the second quasi-physical impression, which the condensed account before us seems to regard as a separate experience.

v. *Sweetness.* “Then with wonderful sweetness he is imbued.” The prologue links it with the inward burning of love as accompanying the same outburst. It speaks of “the influence of sweetest delight and inward sweetness, which, together with that spiritual flame, bedewed my soul to the very marrow.” In another place Rolfe says, “Nevertheless, heat is never without sweetness, though sometimes it is without ghostly

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song." To that final stage we now come.

vi. *Jubilant song.* "And finally he is made glad with songs of rejoicing." The emphasis laid upon this gift of song throughout the recognised works of Hampole is enough to show that there was something very special and truly epoch-making in his life about this experience. It is narrated with circumstantiality and picturesqueness. It was about nine months after the breaking out of the fire of love. He was sitting in the same chapel at night, and singing Psalms, apparently by himself. Suddenly he heard overhead a tumult as of voices singing. Then, as he listened, he felt in himself an answering echo of song, and there was given to him a most delightful heavenly harmony, which remained within him. Henceforth his thoughts and meditations changed into songs, and in his very prayers he

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broke into song ; and such was the abundance of the inward *sweetness*,—note the same feature as with the fire,—that now he sang what before he used to say.

One can hardly help asking oneself,—Had Rolle read his Bede ? Was he fond of the traditions of the great Yorkshire saints, Cedd and Chad, who had founded and ruled over the monastery at Lastingham, not many miles from either of the Thorntons ? Had he read Bede's account of St Chad's death, and of his audition of angels' songs, a week before he died ? Read this story of the monk Owini in Bede's *History*, Book IV., chap. 3, p. 221, in Miss Sellar's edition :—" When . . . the bishop was alone reading or praying in the oratory of that place, on a sudden . . . he heard a sweet sound of singing and rejoicing descend from heaven to earth, . . . till it came to the roof of the oratory where the bishop was. . . . After about half an

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hour [he] perceived the same song of joy to ascend from the roof . . . and to return to heaven . . . with unspeakable *sweetness*." The parallel seemed worth drawing, for students of mysticism are familiar with the fact that experiences of an ecstatic kind are apt to take form from materials that are already present in the mind.

The striking feature, however, in Rolle's case is that the hearing of singing awoke in him a response of song,—indeed, seemed to be the final experience, bringing him into such close touch with God that his whole being was enriched, his forces set free, and a poetic afflatus bestowed upon him. The phenomena of the Unitive life seem to have been henceforth displayed in him,—occasional times of rapt ecstasy, constant Practice of the Presence of God, with creative and inspirational influence over the lives of others.



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It scarcely needs to trace at any length the obscure story of the rest of his life. Horstman has gathered together fragments of autobiography from many of his writings. For our present purpose it may be enough to say that after the development of the mystical life in him as detailed above, Rolle seems to have spent the remaining twenty or twenty-five years of his life, not in solitary communion with God, though this was immensely attractive to him, but in constant efforts for the spiritual teaching and help of his "Even-Christians." Far and wide he seems to have wandered on apostolic mission tours. Much he wrote in prose and verse of the love of the Lord Jesus, the ways and the joys of the contemplative life, and the practical life of religion in the world. Finally, he seems to have settled down as the spiritual adviser of the Cistercian nuns at Hampole, near Doncaster, where he died in 1349.

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## **II. "THE MENDING OF LIFE "**

### **AND ITS READERS**

The fourteenth century was essentially a mystical century, as the twentieth century bids fair to be. It followed an age of prodigious activity, mental, artistic, and religious,—the period of the culmination of scholasticism, the building of the **Early English Cathedrals**, the **Coming of the Friars**: the time was ripe for a deeper movement, for a development of the kingdom within. In like manner the twentieth century succeeds to the Victorian age, with its outburst of literary activity, its revolutionary movements in scientific research, its **Evangelical**, **Tractarian**, and **Liberal** movements in religion. Nowadays people crave for time to "grow a little soul": they hunger after a vital and inward touch with the Divine: they have an ear for

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any voice that tells of the mystical and the transcendental.

So in that fourteenth century there was a public for devotional literature: men and women were turning to God: they longed for teaching and guidance in the "Mystical Way."

And Richard Rolle the Hermit, when once he had received his ecstatic experiences, had entered upon the Higher Life, and had "got his message," felt constrained to write it down, as well as preach it. His was not an orderly systematic mind: he was an inspired, overflowing, poetic enthusiast. There is, however, a considerable difference between "The Mending of Life" and his other works. It is an attempt to systematise. He divides up his subject, and proceeds from point to point. It gives the impression of having been written in his riper years. When the first fiery, Pentecostal impulse had had

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time to become ripened and mellowed. He saw the need of systematic instruction: he tried to meet it.

The "Fire of Love" has the air of being the early outflow of exhilaration and enthusiasm in the first days of the new experiences of "Heat, Song, and Sweetness." It begins with words of marvel at the "exceeding greatness of the revelations," and proceeds through chapter after chapter of rapturous panegyrics of the joys of the love of Christ, with rules and suggestions thrown out haphazard for the edification of those that would learn this way.

The "*Melum Contemplativorum*" is still in manuscript and in Latin, though there are several other copies extant besides the MS. at Corpus Christi College, Oxford, alone mentioned by Horstman. There are, for example, MSS. of it at Lincoln Cathedral Library, in the Bodleian, and at Emmanuel and

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St John's Colleges, Cambridge, the last being a superb specimen of fifteenth century work. Horstman gives copious extracts, and ascribes it to the earliest period of Rolle's writings.

The "Form of Perfect Living" has much resemblance to the "Mending of Life," and contains somewhat similar elements. It may be that it was written in English by Rolle in fairly early days after the ecstatic experiences, of which it is full, and was the basis upon which the Latin treatise, "*De Emendatione Vitae*," or "*Peccatoris*," was composed. This is open, however, to as much difference of opinion as is expressed over the relation between St Paul's epistles to the Galatians and to the Romans.

I should myself incline to regard the "Form of Living" as having a more personal character, as addressed to one or perhaps two individuals,—"*Margaret*," according to the Cambridge MS., Dd. v.

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64,—“Cecil,” according to the Bodleian MS., Rawlinson, C. 285; while the “*De Emendatione Vitae*” would seem to have been written later, on more general lines, as a carefully composed treatise on the contemplative life, intended for readers at large.

The treatise is divided into *twelve chapters*, and is indeed often called by that name, whether in Latin or English. They seem to be subdivided into four groups with three chapters in each. The first three are mainly negative—of turning from sin, the world and the devil; of despising the world; and of the meaning of voluntary poverty. So Thomas à Kempis begins his “*Ecclesiastical Music*” with a chapter “Of the Imitation of Christ, and Contempt of all the Vanities of the World.”

The second group begins with the positive ordering of the convert's life,

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followed by a warning of the inevitable tribulation that it would involve, and an exhortation to the patience that would be needed. In chapter iv. it is curious to see the writer beginning with strictly orthodox and normal definitions of the necessary steps of Contrition, Confession and Satisfaction, but before long launching forth into exhortations and suggestions entirely characteristic of his own mystical method and tone.

The third group—on prayer, meditation and reading—are quite in Rolle's own manner, and show **what his own** life was nursed upon, and **how laborious** was his personal practice.

Finally, in the last three chapters he lets himself go, and pours forth the deepest secrets that he has learnt of the way of holiness, of the love of God, and of the meaning of Contemplation. These are what all the other steps lead

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up to: this is the sum and substance of his message.

What then does he mean by "Contemplation"? From prolonged study of this and kindred chapters these conclusions would seem to emerge,—That Rolle regards "contemplation" as a term which can be used in three senses:

(1) It covers the whole life of those who have reached a stage in which the eyes are opened to see God, and the heart is attuned to walk with Him. (2) It may be narrowed down to definite seasons of devotion, and divided into reading, prayer and meditation. (3) It consists specifically in those moments or times in such seasons of meditation when the soul is filled with enthusiastic songs of joy in the Lord, and lifted up into immediate consciousness of God in Jesus Christ.

Those who have once tasted these



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experiences enter thereby, as by a step upwards, into the "Contemplative" or "Unitive Life." This needs to be kept up by the definite process or practice of Contemplation or devotional exercises; and these from time to time are crowned with the joys of "immediacy," or Contemplation proper. These joys rekindle the Fire of Love, and reanimate the contemplative life. So, "gyrans gyrando vadit Spiritus."

### **III. APOLOGIA**

This seems to be the best place where the present editor can offer, in two directions, an "Apologia pro vita sua."

In the first place it seems to surprise some Roman Catholics that an Anglican clergyman should take an interest in the medieval mystics. In a review of my little edition of the Amherst manuscript of the "Shewings" of Lady  
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Julian of Norwich, a writer in "The Universe" expresses this perplexity :—  
" It would be interesting to know the reason of the evident interest felt by Anglicans for the great Catholic mystics. It is a question which has never been answered satisfactorily. Anglicans deny absolutely the authority on which such revelations as those of Lady Julian rest ; they deliberately hold aloof from the only place where such phenomena are possible—the Catholic Church ; yet in spite of all this a minister of the Establishment can take, apparently, a real delight in editing these treasures of the Church he disavows."

I have quoted these expressions at length that I might make an explanation which to some at least, though probably not to the reviewer, might seem satisfactorily to answer his question. Anglicans take an interest in the medieval mystics in general because they regard

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nothing in the history of the human soul as being alien to them. They take an interest in the mystical experiences and writings of Lady Julian or of Richard Rolle as they do in those of George Fox or of Boehme, of William Law or of Rabindra Nath Tagore. Anglicans are profoundly interested to read such passages in Lady Julian's "Shewings" as this:—"All this brought our Lord suddenly to my mind, and mightily and lively and comforting me against this manner of weakness in prayers, and said: 'I am ground of thy beseeching.'" Equally they find what appeals to them when they read that George Fox "heard a voice which said, 'There is one, even Christ Jesus, that can speak to thy condition.'" Both these "voices" come home to our hearts with threefold authority: the messages contained in them "may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture";

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they are wholly in accord with the teaching of the whole Church throughout all ages ; and they find an answer in our own spiritual consciousness. We do not attach an absolute authority to the writings of any mystics, but study them with sympathetic independence.

But on the other hand Anglicans take a special interest in the writings and history of such as Lady Julian and Richard Rolle, because we take a pride in them as fellow-members in the " *Ecclesia Anglicana*." We love to claim our spiritual and ecclesiastical descent in unbroken line from such mystics as St Cuthbert and St Chad, from Benedictines like Anselm and Augustinians like Hilton, from hermits and anchoresses like the two with whom we are specially concerned. The English Church at the Reformation threw off the external authority with which for centuries past it had been at issue, and regained its

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national independence. It in no way disowns its past saints, but rather still continues to "take a real delight" in its ancient treasures of devotional inheritance.

So far for the first direction in which an "Apologia" seems needed. There is another. *Protestant* friends also express surprise that an *Evangelical* can take so deep an interest in what they regard as Roman Catholic writers. The attack is here from the other side; and the defence must be more intimate and personal, since it is to one's own circle that the explanation has to be made.

Let me say then frankly at once what it was that attracted me to the study of these two writers. It was the striking similarity in their descriptions of their spiritual experiences to what I had long been familiar with through close contact with the movement connected with the Keswick Convention. Those two souls

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in solitude seemed to reach what these many saints of to-day have often sought and found in great corporate gatherings. Intimate communion with God ; intense love for the Lord Jesus Christ ; victory over sin through an indwelling Saviour ; times of visitation and spiritual rapture ; and all leading to lives of Practical Holiness,—these they seemed to have in common. In particular the striking correspondences between the experience of Richard Rolle and that of Canon Harford-Battersby, founder (with Mr Robert Wilson) of the Keswick Convention, had a personal interest which has grown with the years.

Both went up to Oxford, but came down without finding the spiritual rest which they sought. In the Oxford of the early fourteenth century Scholasticism was dominant ; in that of the forties of the nineteenth century, Tractarianism. Neither in that, nor in the Evangelicalism

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of his home influences, did the later student find satisfaction. He lived a deeply "purgative" life: as the years of his ministry at Keswick progressed, he certainly knew much of the "illuminative" experiences; but he had not reached the higher stage of the "unitive" life, with its joy, its stableness, its outflow. Then in the early seventies there came that mystical wave of "Holiness teaching" from America, which flowed so deep in the "Broadlands Conferences," and which at last reached Oxford in the epoch-making meetings of September, 1874. It may be felt to be not out of place if there is here quoted an account of what Canon Harford-Battersby there passed through, from the brief **Memoir** of his life and of the founding of the Keswick Convention. It will add another witness to the reality and permanence of such psychological changes as are the basis and the subject of Rolle's

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mystical writings, and it may serve to show that the mystical life is not confined to any one period or ruled by any exclusive methods.

A Scottish minister, Dr Elder Cumming, who had passed through a similar crisis of resistance and surrender, and had come out into a like expansion and emancipation, wrote to one of the editors of the *Memoir*, a few years after the death of its subject, as follows :—

“ Quite lately I met a lady who told me that, after a day or two of the Oxford gathering had passed, she met Canon Battersby there in the street, and asked him whether he could explain to her the teaching that was being given, and whether he could accept it. His reply was that he could not do so, and did not believe that it was sound. Before leaving Oxford, however, she met him again, walking with a friend, when he stopped her to say that he



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had entirely changed his opinion on the subject, and could testify to the possession of a new and distinct blessing which his soul had received, to which, though long a Christian, he had been quite a stranger before."

It will be observed that the phraseology is entirely different from that of the fourteenth century ; but the experience ran on all fours with it. The writer went on to describe it :—" During a night of the Convention he could not sleep. . . . His mind was dwelling on the truths he had heard, and on the Lord Jesus. As the hours passed, the presence of the Lord grew more and more real, till at length he had, in the vision of faith, a sight of the glory of the Lord ! That vision he could not describe. I think he added that he would not, if he could. But he said : ' I shall never forget what I then saw, till my dying day ! ' . . . Many have alluded to the

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light that shone upon your father's face ! It seemed to me as if it were the light of the Lord's glory, which he saw during the sleepless night, that remained upon it till the end."

Eight years later, on July 28, 1882, my father referred, at the closing evening meeting of the Convention of that year, —the last he was to take part in,—to the same experience :—" I got a revelation of Christ to my soul so extraordinary, glorious and precious, that from that day it illuminated my life. I found *He* was *all* I wanted ; I shall never forget it ; the day and hour are present with me. How it humbled me, and yet what peace it brought ! "

Writing on the eve of the Keswick Convention of 1918, it is natural to look back with wonder and thanksgiving upon all that has flowed forth upon the world, through the unbroken series of

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thirty-eight annual gatherings since 1875, and to trace it back in large degree to the experience of that one man in that great concourse of people at Oxford in 1874.

And then the mind goes back well-nigh six hundred years to that solitary cell to which the young hermit fled from Oxford about the year 1320. There he was visited with the rapture of Heat and Song and Sweetness. Thence he was sent out to quicken and spread abroad through the land the "fire of love" in other hearts, to produce in them in infinite variety impulses that went towards the "mending of life."

And the eager hope springs up that wherever it may come, this little book of his, in its new form, may bring to hearts that are cold new warmth, to lives that have been embittered fresh sweetness, and may put a new song

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in lips that have forgotten or never  
learnt to sing.

" My song shall be of Jesus ;  
His mercy crowns my days ;  
He fills my cup with blessings,  
And tunes my heart to praise."

EMMANUEL VIC. RAGE,  
WEST HAMPTON,  
*July 17 1888.*

## THE PRESENT EDITION

The origin of the present edition can be best described in language of the first person, with apologies for seeming egotism.

I had long been familiar with Misyn's version of the " Emendatio," and greatly aggravated by its Latinised constructions and frequent unintelligibility. I therefore thought of trying to put it into

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plainer English, but gave up the task as beyond my powers.<sup>1</sup>

However, on searching the catalogues of Cambridge MSS. there seemed to be two other English texts, of which the first lines seemed to differ from Misyn. On the first occasion possible I examined these at the University Library, and found that this was the case, and, moreover, that they were distinct from one another. Of these one was the MS. Ff. v. 40, upon which the present edition is based; the second was Ff. v. 30, which is given in the Bibliography the letter-mark "D." Of this four other copies have since come under my notice. The version seems to have been a very popular one: it is free and expressive, and has been improved upon by the translator

<sup>1</sup> I am, however, glad to know that a modernized version of Misyn's "Fire of Love" and "Mending of Life" is being published by Miss F. M. Comper, with an Introduction by Miss Evelyn Underhill.

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by the interpolation of picturesque phrases apparently based upon no Latin original.

Further search at Cambridge led to the discovery of a fourth type of English translation, made by a well-known fifteenth century copyist, John Cock, "redituarius" or Renter of St Bartholomew's Hospital, who copied, about the year 1480, the magnificent charterulary of that Institution, still in their possession.

Yet another distinct form of English version appeared in the British Museum, in Lansdowne MS. 455, while another copy of Misyn's text came to light in the splendid collection of mystical works, the Amherst MS., Addit. 37790.

After transcribing the first chapter for myself from each of the four unpublished versions, I came to the conclusion that the F. type was written in the most attractive English, and needing the

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least explanation for modern readers. It seemed to be that which would best lend itself to my purpose, namely, to present to the general reader a readable version of the treatise, which should give him a sufficiently accurate idea of the teaching of Richard Rolle as summed up in a brief form therein.

The original Latin has been printed in four forms :—

In 1510 at Paris in the “*Speculum Spiritualium*.”

In 1533 at Antwerp in a beautiful little book, with three other Latin tracts by Rolle.

In 1536 in a large volume at Cologne.

In De La Bigne’s “*Magna Bibliotheca*” : Cologne, 1622 (vol. xv.); and in a later edition of the same : Lyons 1677. (vol. xxvi.).

I have tried in the present edition to present as faithfully as possible the

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wording of the Middle-English translator giving explanations at the foot of the page.

I hope that the movable glossary may save constant reference to the end of the volume, while also serving the pedestrian purpose of a bookmark. Should it be mislaid, there still remains the duplicate on page 96.

Finally, let me express my indebtedness to friends who have helped, and especially to Mr J. A. Herbert, of the British Museum, who has very kindly read the proofs and given valuable suggestions. My debt to Miss Evelyn Underhill, public and private, is also very great. A transcript of the MS. at Cambridge was made for me by Mr Alfred Rogers, of the University Library, and I have to thank him for much help in settling difficult points of reading and interpretation.

D. H.



# The Mending of Life

## Provisional Bibliography of English versions of the "Emendatio Vitae."

Five distinct English translations were made before A.D. 1450, and of these versions ten MSS. are known to the present editor. He has assigned a single letter to each group for convenience of reference.

### GROUP I.—F.

Ff. v. 40. Camb. Univ. Library, folios 14 to 32. The basis of the present edition. Early fifteenth century.

### GROUP II.—M. (Misyn). 2 copies.

M. 1. Corpus Christi Coll., Oxford, MS. 236, fol. 45-56 (E.E.T.S., O.S. 106).

M. 2. Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 37790, fol. 1-18.

### GROUP III.—C.

Caius Coll., Camb., MS. 669, pp. 76-147. Written by John Cok, of St Bartholomew's Hospital.

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**Group IV.**—D. 3 copies.

D. 1. Digby MS. (Bodleian) 18, fol. 7-37.

D. 2. Douce MS. (Bodleian) 322, fol. 78-94.

D. 3. Dublin (Trin. Coll.) MS. 432, fol. 80-121.

D. 4. Camb. Univ. Library, Pl. v. 30, fol. 141-160.

D. 5. Brit. Mus. Harleian MS. 1706, fol. 60-739.

**Group V.**—L. (Lansdowne)

Brit. Mus. Lansdowne MS. 435, fol. 41-49.

*N.B.* The list does not profess to be exhaustive.

Note, that the headings to the pages are, as may be seen from page iv, literal translations from the titles given in the *Speculum Spiritualium*.

All words or sentences placed between square brackets, [    ], are supplied by the editor, not being found in the original MS.

While the sheets were in the press, a valuable reference was supplied by Miss Rotha Mary Clay, which seems important enough to add here. It is a Fine of lands in the County of York, dated 44 Ed. III., i.e. A.D. 1371. It was made between John, son of Sir John Dalton, knight, of Kirkby Misperton, and Sir William Pertehay, knight, and relates to a messuage and ten bovates in Kirkby Misperton, held as dowry by Margery, widow of the late Sir John de Dalton (Bodleian MS., Dodsworth 1, fol. 505). From this it may be fairly safe to infer that this Sir John was the same as he who befriended Richard Rolle, and the Dame Margery the lady who appears in several of the lections in the Vita. John de Dalton the younger would perhaps be one of the two sons who had known Rolle at Oxford.

Kirkby Misperton is about five miles from Thornton-le-Dale, and that fact lends strong support to the claims of that Thornton to be the birthplace of the hermit, and of that Kirkby to be the scene of his taking up the hermit life. The matter, however, needs further research, when fresh light may be thrown on the subject.

# [THE MENDING OF LIFE]

## [CHAPTER I]

### [OF CONVERSION]

TARRY thou not for to turn to God, and delay not from day to day; for the unmerciful death ravisheth suddenly wretches,<sup>1</sup> and the bitterness of pain devoureth hastily those that be slow for to turn to God. And it may not be told how many worldly men false hope and presumption hath beguiled.

It is a great sin a man to trust in God's mercy that will not leave his sins, trowing that God's mercy is so much that He will not punish sinners rightfully for their misdeeds. Therefore the Gospel

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* suddenly carries off unhappy men. *Latin*, subito rapit miseros.

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beseeches us thus to do: "Dum dies est operamini; venit enim nox in qua nemo potest operari"<sup>1</sup>: "Work while it is day, for when the night cometh no man may work."

The day he calleth our life here, in which we should alway do good works, knowing that the time of death [is] uncertain to us.

The night he calleth death, in the which our wits be bound, that we may do no good work; but after our deeds we shall receive joy or pain. We live here but a point; yea, and less than a point, for if we make comparison to our life here, and to all the time that is for to come, our life here is nought. How damnable it is to us then, to spend our life here in love of vanities, and alway stand idle and negligent! Therefore "Lord God, turn us to Thee, and then shall we be turned well: heal us and then we shall be whole."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> John ix. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Lam. v. 21.

## Of Conversion

Many be not healed, but they be slain,<sup>1</sup> and their wounds rot; for to-day they be turned to God, and the morrow they be turned from Him. Of these it was said in Holy Writ, "Curavimus Babilonem, et non est sanata"<sup>2</sup>: "We have healed Babylon, and it is not whole," for it is not verily turned to Christ.

What is the turning to God, but a turning from the world, from sin, from the devil, and from the flesh? And what is the turning from God, but a turning to an unskilful love of creatures to the works of the devil, to lust of the flesh and of the world?

We turn not to God by steps of our feet, but by following of Him in love and in good manners and thews.<sup>3</sup> Then turn we to God when we think busily for to keep and fulfil His counsels and His com-

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*, corrumpuntur. *MS.* slawen.

<sup>2</sup> Jer. li. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* in good customs and habits. *Latin*, sed imitatione affectuum et morum.

## The Mending of Life

mandments; that whether we sit or we stand, the dread of God passeth not out of our hearts. I speak not of the dread that is painful, but of the dread that is in charity, whereby we give reverence to the majesty of God. And so we should dread Him that we grieve Him in nothing. And if we be thus disposed, then be we readily turned to-ward God and fro-ward the world.

Turning from the world is nought else but for to put aback all his delights, and for to suffer the bitterness thereof gladly for Christ's love, and to forget all unprofitable occupations and worldly needs, that our thought altogether be turned to God, be as it were dead to the world's love, and that our soul stretch unto heavenly desire, alway having God before his eyes. Thus the Prophet saith that he did: "Providebam dominum in conspectu meo semper"<sup>1</sup>: "I saw alway God in my sight." He saith not, "a little stound,"

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xvi. 8 (Vulgate xv.).

## Of Conversion

as those do that put earthly lusts before the sight of their heart, in the which they delight and put all their love. The Prophet telleth whom we shall love, desire and behold, saying thus: "*Oculi mei semper ad dominum, quoniam ipse evellet de laqueo pedes meos*"<sup>1</sup>: "Mine eyes be alway to Godward, for He shall draw my feet out of the snare." Hereby is understood that if we lift not up our inward eyes stedfastly to Godward, we shall not escape the snare of temptations.

Many things let that the eyes of the heart may not be fastened in God; and some be these, - Plenty of worldly riches, glosing and pleasing of women, and fairness of youth. This is the threefold rope, that is hard to break.<sup>2</sup> And yet it must be broken, if Christ should be loved.

He that desireth for to love Christ with great love, he casteth away all that

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxv. (Vulg. xxiv.) 15.

<sup>2</sup> Eccles. iv. 12.



## The Mending of Life

letteth him therefrom : he spareth neither his father, nor his mother, nor himself, in this cause, that he break not all the obstacles and their lettings. All that he may do him thinketh too little that Christ were loved. He flieth as a bird from sins and from vices. He looketh as a drunken man to worldly solace. \*He [ad-]dresseth him so inwardly to Godward, that he taketh no keep<sup>1</sup> to his witterly wits.<sup>2\*</sup> He is gathered inward to himself. He is lifted up to Christ. And when men trow that he is sorry, he is wonderly glad.

Many be that say that they would turn to God ; but they say that they may not fulfil their will, for they be letted with occupations. Their cold hearts be worthy for to be reprovéd, for without dread<sup>3</sup> if they were touched

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* heed.      <sup>2</sup> *i.e.* outward senses : see p. 42.

\* . . . \* *The Latin of these two sentences reads : "Immo in Deum se totum dirigens pene sensus exteriores amittit."*

<sup>3</sup> *Middle English for without doubt.*

## Of Conversion

with the least spark of Christ's love, they should with all their busyness seek by what way that they might come to God's service; nor they should not cease enquiring till they had found. Such men make excusations that accuseth themselves.<sup>1</sup>

Many men hath richesse drawen from God, and many have been beguiled with women, and those that long time have lived well, oft times by these be drenched in the dike of sin. For bodily fairness is soon loved, and then it draweth to it the lover, and casteth him down headlong. And then be such a man's works worse after his turning than he was before. Then is his good fame made black; and he that was praised before now is despised. I saw a man of whom it was said that fifteen years he chastened his body with great penance; and afterward he fell into fleshly sin with

<sup>1</sup> In MS. C., John Cock makes here a neater epigram: for oft their excusing is their accusing.

## The Mending of Life

[his] servant's wife, from the which he might not be departed till his death. And his servants said that when the priest came to him with the sacraments of Holy Church,<sup>1</sup> at his death he cursed them, and despised the sacraments. Therefore men that be new turned to God should flee occasions of sin, and also words and deeds and sights that stir to wickedness; and the more unlawful a thing is, the more it shall be fled.<sup>2</sup> The devil ariseth wonderly against those

<sup>1</sup> *This MS. here reads confusedly, And his servants said to him, When the priest cometh to thee with, etc.*

<sup>2</sup> Here is a good example of variations arising through errors or "improvements" by copyists of the Latin text. The original text probably read, "*Quo enim res est magis illicita, eo erit amplius desiderata*"; and so it stands in Brit. Mus. Addit. MS. 34763, followed by the English translators of the D. type, "coveted and desired," and the C. and L. versions, "desired."

But the La Bigne edition has "*deferenda*"; the Speculum reads "*detestunda*"; and the Antwerp edition has "*deserenda*," followed by our F. MS., "fled," and by Misyn, "forsaken."

## Of Conversion

that he seeth that they be turned away from him; and he ceaseth not for to kindle and for to set a-fire the desires of the world and of the flesh: he bringeth before the soul the old lusts and likings, and he stirreth in such a man without number of vain thoughts and unprofitable affections and loves that were first asleep.

In all these he that is turned shall have him manly<sup>1</sup>: he shall take spiritual armour, and again-stand stedfastly the devil and all his suggestions; he shall slake fleshly desires; alway he shall draw to the love of God; and despising of the world shall not go from him. Of the which shall be said next.

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*, se exerceat viriliter, *i.e.* shall play the man.

## [CHAPTER II]

### HOW THE WORLD SHALL BE DESPISED

THE despising of the world is nought else but for to overpass<sup>1</sup> all temporal things without the love of them, and for to seek here nothing but God, and nothing charge of vain joys and solace of the world; scarcely for to receive things that be needful, and sometime when they want,<sup>2</sup> gladly to suffer. This is the despising of this world: this is profitable to thy salvation.

If the world be despised, it is not loved, for we worship all-thing that we love. It is shameful for to worship dirt

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*, transire.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* when they are lacking. *Latin*, si aliquando desunt.

## Of Contempt of the World

and harlotry; and so doth he that loveth earthly things. And therefore it is that the rich covetous men make themselves servants to filth and to stinking things; and they have joy for to be called lords of other men.

That one man is lord of another man, it is not by kind, but by fortune and hap; but that vices be lord of man, it cometh of a wicked will. Put away thy wicked will, and then shalt thou be free from the devil and from sin; and then shalt thou be made a servant to righteousness,<sup>1</sup> that shall teach thee for to despise worldly things.

The covetise<sup>2</sup> of the world and the love of God be contrary together, so that they may not rest in one soul; and the further thou castest from thee covetise the more thou shalt taste the love of God. The more thy covetise is, the less is thy charity.

O thou wretched soul, what seekest

<sup>1</sup> See Rom. vi. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Latin, cupiditas.

## The Mending of Life

thou in the world, since thou knowest that all thy worldly things pass away? Those things shall soonest beguile thee that most pleaseth thee here. Why busiest thee about deadly things<sup>1</sup>? Why covetest thou so busily things that perish lightly? Seest thou not that they perish sooner than they be gotten? But "I know well where thou dwellest, where that Satan's seat is,"<sup>2</sup> that hath blinded thine eyes, and by his sorcery he hath bewitched thee, that thou shouldest covet fleeing things and love hateful things; that thou shouldest despise things that last; and thou shouldest cleave to things that vanish away? And so thou groundest thee upon a false foundment. When thou trowest for to stand, thou shalt fall in the fire.

Those that live in temporal abundance by those [things] that they love be beguiled, that is to say, by riches, by dignities, by

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, cur te rebus mortalibus satagis?*

<sup>2</sup> *Rev. ii. 13.*

## Of Contempt of the World

lusts, by great power, and by great worship. These bind them in sins and wretchedness: out of these they be not unbound till the death cometh, and then it is too late, for then shall they have everlasting pain. All these let them from despising of the world, from the love of God, from the knowing of themselves, and from the desire of heavenly bliss.

No man may be saved but if he forsake the world. Let him then forsake it in his youth's age, the while that heat is in the body. What thing shall like<sup>1</sup> him that disposeth him[-self] to love Christ? He shall defoul<sup>2</sup> his youth, and set nought thereby: he shall keep his strength to God: he shall tell nought by riches<sup>3</sup>: he shall know that the grace of the world is false, and fairness is vain; and shortly he shall despise all worldly things as a shadow. And thou, fleshly

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* please. *Latin*, delectabit.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin*, calcabit.

<sup>3</sup> *Latin*, divitias pro nihilo ducet.



## **The Mending of Life**

lover, what findest thou in thy flesh that thou delightest thee so therein? In hap, fairness pleaseth thee? If thou have joy in thy skin, why lookest thou not what is under the skin? Knowest thou not that the fairhead of the skin is a covering of filth and of corruption, and oft times it is the cause of losing of the soul? It is enough to thee for to despise all other things, and to love God, praise God, to be with God, to joy in God, not go away from God, but to cleave to Him with a fervent desire.

The world himself stirreth us for to despise it, for it is full of wretchedness: therein is lasting malice, strong persecution, gnawing envy, false backbiting, false blaming, bitterness of slander. Therein be all things out of right order; righteousness is not loved, truth is not approved. Therein is false truth, and cruel love, the which lasteth in prosperity, and falleth in adversity.

Also other things there be that should

## Of Contempt of the World

stir us to despise the world, as changing of time, shortness of life, the sickness of death, and the unsicker time of it, the stableness of everlasting things, the vanities of things that be here, the truth of joy that is to come. Choose that thee liketh.<sup>1</sup> If thou love the world, thou shalt perish therewith. If thou love Christ, thou shalt reign with Him.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* whichever pleaseth thee. *Latin*, *elige quod vis*.

## [CHAPTER III]

### HOW POORNESS SHALL BE HAD

CHRIST said in the Gospel, "Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende omnia que habes, et da pauperibus, et veni sequere me"<sup>1</sup>: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell all that thou hast, and give it to poor men, and follow Me." Here may thou see that perfection is in forsaking of earthly things, and in following of Christ. Some men that forsake their good,<sup>2</sup> follow not Christ; for some be worse after they have forsaken their good than they were before. For then they backbite their even-Christians; they defame them; they be full of envy and malice; they put themselves afore other men; they praise their

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* their goods. *Latin*, bona sua.

## Of Poverty

own state; they despise all other men. How trowest [thou] the devil beguileth such men, for they have neither the world nor God? He leadeth them by by-paths till he bring them to pain.<sup>1</sup>

Thou that understandest these [things], take poverty another way. When Christ said, "go and sell," etc., He understandeth a changing of love and of thoughts,—that he that was first proud, let him now be meek; and he that was angry, let him now be mild; he that was envious, let him live in charity; and he that was covetous, let him be large<sup>2</sup> discretely; and he that was foul, let him abstain him from all spices<sup>3</sup> of wickednesses; and if he did excess before in meats and drinks, let him amend it by fasting; and he that loved the world too much before, let him turn all to the love of Jesu Christ. He

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*, ad eterna tormenta.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* generous.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* species; *cp.* French, espèce. *Latin*, ab omni specie mala. = Vulgate, 1 Thess. v. 22.

## The Mending of Life

shall fix in one desire of God all the thoughts of his heart; and then shall that wilful poverty and mischief<sup>1</sup> that a man suffereth for God be fructuous and meedful. Christ said, "*Beati pauperes spiritu, quoniam ipsorum est regnum celorum*"<sup>2</sup>: "Blessed be the poor men in spirit, for theirs [is] the bliss of heaven." What is poverty of the spirit, but meekness of the soul,<sup>3</sup> whereby a man knoweth his frailty and his sickness? And when he seeth that he may not come to perfect stableness but by the grace of God, he leaveth and casteth away all things that may let him from that grace; and he putteth all his desire in his Maker and His joy. And as out of a root of the tree come many branches and boughs, so out of wilful poverty, this manner taken, come virtues and many good thews.

Some men change their kirtle, but not their soul. They leave riches as to the

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, voluntaria paupertas et angustia.*

<sup>2</sup> *Matt. v. 3.*

<sup>3</sup> *Latin, mentis.*

## Of Poverty

sight, but they gather to them many vices and sins. What is worse than a poor proud man? What is worse than is an envious beggar? Therefore thou that leavest all things for God's sake, <sup>1</sup>take more keep to that that thou forsakes than to that that thou leavest.<sup>1</sup> Take ~~keep~~ busily<sup>2</sup> how thou shalt follow Christ in good manners. Christ said, "Discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde"<sup>3</sup>: "Learn of Me, for I am mild and meek in heart." He said not, "Learn of Me, for I am poor," for poverty by itself is neither virtue, but rather it is wretchedness. And it is not for to praise<sup>4</sup> of itself, but for it is an instrument for to get virtues. Also it helpeth and maketh a man to leave many occasions and stirrings of sin. Also poverty shall be desired for it maketh a man for to be holden little by, though he be virtuous; but it maketh

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup> *Latin*, vide magis quid contempnis quam quid relinquis.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin*, vide diligenter.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xi. 29.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* praiseworthy. *Latin*, laudabilis.

## The Mending of Life

him for to be despised among worldly livers. And for to suffer all these [things] for the love of Christ, it is an high and a great merit and meed. In ensample to us Christ led [a] poor life in this world, for he knew well that it is hard to those men that live in riches and in delights, [to] enter into the bliss of heaven.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, that men should the more busily take to them wilful poverty, Christ be-hight<sup>2</sup> those men that leave worldly goods for His love great worship and lordship in heaven. He said thus, "Vos qui reliquistis omnia et secuti estis me sedebitis super sedes xii, judicantes duodecim tribus israel."<sup>3</sup>

"Ye that have left all earthly things, and have followed Me, ye shall sit upon the twelve sieges<sup>4</sup> of heaven, deeming<sup>5</sup> the twelve kindreds of Israel."

Those men that have wilful poverty,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xix. 23.

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* promised.

<sup>3</sup> Matt. xix. 28.

<sup>4</sup> *i.e.* seats. *Latin*, sedes.

<sup>5</sup> *i.e.* judging. *Latin*, judicantes.

## Of Poverty

and want mildnesses and meeknesses, they are more wretches<sup>1</sup> than those that have great riches. They shall not sit upon high seats in heaven for to deem other men, but they shall be deemed themselves with body and soul. Those men that be here meek and mild, and also have great riches, shall stand on Christ's right side, and shall be saved in [the] Doom.

Some men say thus, "We may not leave all things for God's love. We be feeble. We must keep still the things that be needful to our life in that is lawful." But such men be the less worth, for they dare not suffer for God's love hard poverty and dis-ease. Yet may such men come to high virtues by the grace of God, and they may be lifted up to contemplation of heavenly things, if they leave worldly occupations and businesses thereof, and give them busily to prayer and meditation, so that they

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, miserabiliores.*



## The Mending of Life

may keep worldly goods without love of them. They shall take keep for that it is a foul covetise a man to seek and get more than needeth him; and to keep still things that need, it is frailty; but to leave all things, it is perfection.<sup>1</sup>

Those men that be perfect shall take keep, since there shall be great things and high, to the which they may not come here, that they be not proud of the little that they have; and so they shall come to the rule of good life here.

<sup>1</sup> The Middle English of this passage being somewhat misleading to modern readers, the Latin is here given from the "Speculum" edition:—"Attendant ergo jugiter quod superflua quirere est vilis cupiditatis, necessaria retinere est infirmitatis, sed omnia propter Christum relinquere est perfectionis." "Let them observe carefully that to seek what is superfluous is vile covetousness; to keep what is necessary is infirmity; but to leave all for Christ is perfection."

## [CHAPTER IV]

### OF THE SETTING AND THE RULE OF LIFE

THAT a man might be rightly ruled to the worship<sup>1</sup> of God, to the profit of himself and his even-Christians, four things be to say.

[I.] The first, what defouleth a man; and those be three things: that be, sins of the soul within, and sins in word, and in deed.<sup>2</sup> A man sinneth in his soul when he thinketh anything against the worship of God: also if he suffer it for to be drawn about with vain thoughts, and if it be too busy about worldly things.

In word a man sinneth when he lieth,

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, honorem; modern English, to the glory of God.*

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, peccata cogitationis, oris, et operis.*

## The Mending of Life

when he forswearcth himself, when he curseth, when he backbiteth, when he defendeth an error though it be unknown to him for an error, when he speaketh folly or foul words of ribaldry, and when he telleth idle tales.

In deed a man sinneth manywise, as in lechery, in unlawful touching and kissing, if a man defoul himself in this sin wilfully, or give occasion for to be defouled : also in stealing, in beguiling,<sup>1</sup> in smiting, and in such other.

[II.] The second, what be those[things] that cleanse a man ; and those be three : that is to say, [1] Sorrow of heart,<sup>2</sup> and casting out thereof of all affections and loves that belong not to the love and the praising of God : [2] Shrift of mouth,<sup>3</sup> the which shall be continually clean and whole<sup>4</sup> : [3] Satisfaction in deed,<sup>5</sup> that

*Latin, defraudando.*

*Latin, contritio cogitationis.*

*Latin, confessio oris.*

*Latin, tempestiva, nuda et integra.*

*Latin, satisfactio operis.*

## Of Ordering of Life

hath three parts : fasting, for that a man hath trespassed against himself : prayer, for he hath trespassed against God : almsdeed, for he hath trespassed against his even-Christian. I say not that a man shall do almsdeed of other men's goods, but he shall restore it, for sin is not forgiven to a man that hath another man's good with wrong, till the good be restored.

[III.] The third, what be those [things] that keep cleanness of the *heart*; and [they] be three : that is,—a quicker thought in thinking on God, that in all time they think of God, out-take<sup>1</sup> the time of sleep : a busy keeping of thine outward wits, that thy tasting, thy smelling, thy hearing, thy sight, thy touching, be kept under the bridle of discretion : also honest occupation, as in reading, in speaking of ghostly things, or writing, or such other profitable things.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. except.

## The Mending of Life

Also three things be that keep cleanness of the *mouth*: a good bethinking afore thou speak what thou shalt speak; a refraining of too much speech; and hate of leasings. *Lyngs' death.*

Also three things keep cleanness in *deed*: a measurable taking in meats and in drinks; a voiding of evil company; and a busy mind<sup>1</sup> of death.

[IV.] The fourth, what be those [things] that draw us to the onehead<sup>2</sup> of God's will; and those be three:—Example of creatures, how they serve God in their degree; and an homelihead<sup>3</sup> of God, and that is gotten by meditation and prayer; and the joy of heaven that is somewhat feeled by contemplation. In this manner of living shall a God's man be set as a tree that is planted beside the running water.<sup>4</sup> This shall always be green in good virtues, and shall never wax dry with

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, meditatio.*

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, familiaritas.*

<sup>3</sup> *Latin, conformitatem.*

<sup>4</sup> Ps. i. 3.

## Of Ordering of Life .

sins and vices, but he shall bring forth his fruit in good ensample to other men, and to worship of God in conable time, and not for vain joy. And this against singular men that give ensample for to fast when it is time for to [eat, and againward<sup>1</sup>; and against covetous men that give poor men their corn when it is rotted, or they unbiden<sup>2</sup> till after the death. For this prayed the prophet, when he said, "*Bonitatem et disciplinam et scientiam doce me*"<sup>3</sup>: "Lord God, teach me goodness, discretion and wit." First, by discretion we be set in righteousness and correction for sin. After these we know what is for to do, and what is for to leave; and then we savour ghostly things. When a man hath given all himself to the will of God, and he is waxen in virtues, and passeth other men

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, e contra ; i.e. vice versa.*

<sup>2</sup> *i.e. put it off. Latin, differunt.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ps. cxix. (Vulg. cxviii.) 66. "O learn me true understanding and knowledge," P.B.V.*

## The Mending of Life

in stableness of living and in the desire of God, he shall not joy greatly thereof, nor reckon it to himself, nor he shall not tell better by himself than by other men that seem evil of life; but he shall deem himself most wretch<sup>1</sup> of all other; he shall deem no man but himself; he shall put all other above him; he shall not covet for to be held holy before men, but he shall covet to be set little by; and when he cometh amongst men, he shall covet for to be last and least set by of all other. Holy Writ saith<sup>2</sup>: "Quanto major es, humilia te in omnibus, et tunc coram Deo invenies gratiam": "The more that thou be, meek thou thee in all things, and thou shalt find grace afore God," —yea, grace of lifting up, for God's might is much; it is worshipped of meek men and despised of proud men that seek their own joy and worship, and not

<sup>1</sup> Latin, miserrimum.

<sup>2</sup> The words "Holy Writ saith" are not in the printed editions, nor does *Misyn* give the Latin.

## Of Ordering of Life

God's love. If thou joyest in favour of folk, as God forbid that thou do, and thou receivest worship gladly for fame or good life, wot thou well that thou hast taken thy meed here. Though thou do great penance and abstinence, when thou hast more liking in joy of men than of angels, there is rought kept to thee in that other world but pain. Therefore thou shalt despise thyself perfectly, and flee all worldly joys. Thou shalt do nothing, nor think nought, but for the love of God, that all things and thy life both within and without show the praising of God.

In meat and drink thou shalt be scarce and wise.<sup>1</sup> Thou shalt not be queymous of meats, but eat of all manner of meat, as the time asketh. When thou eatest and drinkest, the mind<sup>2</sup> of God that feedeth thee shall not go out of thy thought, but in every morsel thou shalt /

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, parcus et discretus.*

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, memoria.*



## The Mending of Life

praise Him and bless Him, that thine heart take more keep to the praising of God than to thy meat; also that thine heart be none hour departed from God; and if thou do thus, thou shalt have a noble crown of God; thou shalt overcome the temptations of the devil that greatly beguileth men in eating and in drinking. For the devil casteth down unwary men from virtues by unmeasurable eating, or he destroyeth them by great abstinence.

Many be unstable in eating, for now they take too much and now too little; and so they cannot hold a good rule in living. Unwise men that taste never the sweetness of Christ's love, trow that unwise abstinence is holiness; and they ween not to be great with God, but if they appear singularly to men by scarce and unrightful abstinence. But abstinence by itself is not holiness; but [if] it be discreet and wise, it helpeth a man to be holy; and if thou be indiscreet, it

## Of Ordering of Life

letteth a man for to be holy ; for then it destroyeth good rule, without the which virtues be turned into vices.

He that will take him singular abstinence, he shall flee the sight and the praising of men, that he be not proud and so lose all his travail. Oft times men deem those men most holy that do most abstinence ; and oft they be not so holy as those men that do less abstinence. He that doth verily taste the sweetness of Christ's love, he shall not deem a man holy nor unholy for his fasting. The best it is, and most pleasing pleaseth God, as I hope, that a man conform him in meat and in drink for the place and time and honesty with those men with whom he dwelleth ; else he shall seem superstitious and a feigner of holiness.

Wit ye well, though one man or twain deem well of him, another shall call him an hypocrite and a feigner. But some [there] be that covet vain worship, that

## The Mending of Life

will be singular amongst men, for they eat so little that all men speak of them ; or they will eat other meat than common men do ; and so alway they will be unlike to other men. God put from me this manner of doing. It is a good counsel that those men which may not do great abstinence, that they be sorry thereof ; and therefore those men above them, that may do more abstinence, they should tell better by other men than by themselves, for their virtue is unknown to them. Who may know how greatly such a man that may do no abstinence loveth God and hath [com-]passion of his even-Christians ? And without doubt the virtue of charity passeth all manner of abstinence and all outward deeds, for if abstinence be not underborne with meekness and charity, it is nought. Oft times he that is least abstinent in the presence of men, is more fervent in the love of God. Then he that will travail in the love of God must be strong, for

## Of Ordering of Life

if the flesh be too feeble, he shall not mowe<sup>1</sup> pray, much more he shall not mowe<sup>1</sup> lift up himself with fervent desire into contemplation. I had liefer that a man were feeble for too [great] love than for fasting, as the spouse saith in the Book of Love, "Renunciate dilecto meo quia amore langueo"<sup>2</sup>: "Tell ye to my love that I mourn and [am] feeble for love."<sup>3</sup> Be thou stedfast, and lead thy life after this rule, and though thou mayest not come to thy will at the first, yet hold on, for by long time and travail thou shalt come to perfection. Whether thou go or thou sit, or what [ever] thou do, have always thy ghostly eye up to God. Let not thy thought go from Him. Thou shalt deem that time lost in the which thou thinkest not upon Thy God.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* be able to.

<sup>2</sup> Cant. v. 8.

<sup>3</sup> The "*Speculum Spiritualium*" has here a long passage of two and a half columns, not given in La Bigne, nor in other copies, Latin or English, so far as I have found.

## The Mending of Life

Praise God with thy voice, and covet His love, and deem those that be not occupied, but if thou pray or think on God; but if sleep let thee.<sup>1</sup> Take keep that thou be not carried [away] with vain thoughts. Busy thee not with great worldly cares, but get thee stableness of soul, and hold it so that thou dread not the wickednesses of the world; nor thou shalt not covet unmeasurably the goods thereof. He that dreadeth adversity of the world, he cannot despise the world; and he that joyeth in worldly goods, he is far from ghostly goods. It [be-]longeth to the virtue of abstinence and of stedfastness to despise all adversity and all prosperity and the self death,<sup>2</sup> for to get everlasting life. It [be-]longeth to charity to desire heavenly joys: it is glad in the death: it suffereth

<sup>1</sup> This passage seems to have been misunderstood by the translator. Rolle's meaning was. "Let not sleep find thee otherwise occupied than in praying or thinking on God"

<sup>2</sup> i.e. and death itself.

## **Of Ordering of Life**

**patiently the life here. If thou stye up to this perfection that I have said by the grace of Christ, thou shalt have first tribulation and temptation.**

## [CHAPTER V]

### THAT TRIBULATION SHALL BE SUFFERED PATIENTLY

<sup>1</sup> WHEN the devil seeth one man among a thousand be turned to God, and follow the steps of Christ for to despise worldly things, and speak and love ghostly things, to take perfect penance, and to cleanse himself from sin, he findeth a thousand sleights for to [an-]noy<sup>2</sup> him, and a thousand crafts for to fight against him, that might cast him from the love of Christ to the love of the world, and that he might defoule him again with lecherous thoughts, and such others,

<sup>1</sup> The "Speculum Spiritualium" has five columns at the beginning of this chapter, which I have not yet found elsewhere. All other versions seem to begin as here.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, nocendi.*

## Of Tribulation

whereby that God should hate him ; and then he stirreth against him tribulation and persecution, slanders, and putting on him false blames and hate of men, that the dread of pain should cast him down, whom he might not beguile with sleights.

Now he sheweth sharp things, now pleasing things. He bringeth before his soul lust of old sins. He burneth his heart in his flesh with lecherous thoughts. He beginneth with small and little ; but at the last he cometh to a great flame of wickedness ; and the more he seeth us escape out of his bonds by the grace of God, with the greater busyness he studieth to bring against us all manner of tribulation. He desireth nought else but for to depart us from the soft, chaste clipping and halsing<sup>1</sup> of Christ's love, and to cast

<sup>1</sup> *Both words mean embracing. Latin, ab incorporateis amplexibus et castissimis et suavissimis eterni amoris.*



## The Mending of Life

us into the foul mire of sin and wretchednesses; and that were worse to us than any tongue may tell. Who may conceive his madness<sup>1</sup> that falleth from delights of a king's board to swine's meat? And yet he is more mad<sup>2</sup> that forsaketh delight-meats of the wisdom of the Father of Heaven, and underlowteth himself<sup>3</sup> to uncleanness of the flesh. Be not gluttony and lechery filth of swine? And he that doeth these, he feedeth the devil. How we shall again-stand tribulation and temptation of our enemies, patience shall teach us.

<sup>1</sup> *MS.* wodnesse.

<sup>2</sup> *MS.* wood.

<sup>3</sup> *i.e.* bows himself down. *Latin*, *se subdit*.

## [CHAPTER VI]

### HOW WE SHALL BE PATIENT

THE King's sons should not deign for to turn to meat of unreasonable<sup>1</sup> beasts; but they should despise all unlawful lusts and solace of the world for Christ's love. He that is fed with the Bread from Heaven, he shall not assent to those things that the devil proffereth him.

When temptation and tribulation arise, then should we take ghostly armour and go to battle. Temptations be overcome with stableness of faith and of love of God; and tribulation is overcome with patience. What is patience? Nought else but a wilful sufferance of [an-]noying things.<sup>2</sup> He that is patient

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, irrationabilium.*

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, rerum adversantium.*

## **The Mending of Life**

**will not grutch in woe nor in adversity, but in all time he will please God.**

**The more patient a man be in adversity, the more glorious shall he be in the bliss of heaven. Therefore we shall suffer gladly tribulations and anguish, bitterness and pain, sickness and other mischiefs, for by these our sins be purged and cleansed, and our merit and our meed be made the more.**

**We must needs be burnt here with the love of God and the fire of tribulation, and so be purged from our sins, or we shall be burnt afterward with the bitter fire of purgatory or of hell. Let us then choose one of these, whether we will, for we shall not escape one of them. We may here with a little pain,— if we will meekly suffer it and lean upon God,— avoid all the pains of the other world; and therefore God sends to us tribulation, to draw us from the lust of the world, and that we should avoid the sharp pain of the other world. We**

## Of Patience

must purge with bitterness and sorrows the sins that we did in liking and lust. If sinful men do us dis-ease and tribulation, and we take it patiently, they grieve no men ghostly, but themselves; for with the little harm that they do to us, they win crowns to us, and pain to themselves. Sinful men live here without dis-ease and tribulation; and therefore there is no joy kept to them after their death; and therefore holy men love tribulation, for they know that thereby they shall come to heaven.

The contrary-wise, wicked men grutch in adversity, and flee away from it, for they give themselves so unmeasurably to worldly things that they be deprived from heavenly things. They put all their solace in worldly things, for they have lost the savour of ghostly things. There is no soul here that it cleaveth not either upon God or upon a creature. If it love most a creature, it leaveth God, and then it shall fall with its love into the death.

## The Mending of Life

Such a love in its beginning is travail and folly, and in the midst it is mourning and wretchedness, and in the end it is to hate and pain. But he that loveth his God forsaketh all that is in the world. It is a gladness to him for to speak of Him, for to think upon Him. He sparreth and staketh his outerly wits,<sup>1</sup> that the death enter not in at the windows,<sup>2</sup> and that he be not occupied unprofitably in vanity.

Oft time despite, slander and scorn be raised against such a good man; and then must he take the shield of patience, and he shall be more ready for to suffer wrongs than to put them off. He shall pray for the conversion and the turning to God of those that hate him and despise him. He shall take no keep to please men; but he shall dread to displease God. If a man be tempered in

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* he barreth and bolteth his outward senses.  
*La'in, claudit sensus exteriores.*

<sup>2</sup> Jerem. ix. 21.

## Of Patience

his flesh, he shall then cast down the flesh, that the spirit be not overcome. A temptation to the which a man consenteth not is a matter to get virtues.

There knoweth no man himself whether he is strong or feeble till he be tempted. A man the while he is in peace shall not be called patient; but when he is smitten with wrongs, then may he see if he have patience. Many seem patient when they be not dis-eased,<sup>1</sup> but when a light blast toucheth their heart, anon they be turned unto bitterness and wrath. If they hear a word against their will, they yield twice worse there-again. God keep my soul out of their counsel. We shall [quench]<sup>2</sup> the darts of the enemy with meekness and with sweetness of Christ's love, and we shall not flee the temptation, though it be great and grievous; for the

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, quando non impugnatur.*

<sup>2</sup> *The copyist has omitted a word here between two pages, 23<sup>a</sup> and 23<sup>b</sup>. The Latin reads, *extinguenda sunt jacula . . .**

## The Mending of Life

harder and the greater that the battle be, the more glorious is the victory and the greater is the meed. Therefore Holy Writ saith, "Beatus vir qui suffert temptationem"<sup>1</sup>: "Blessed is the man that suffereth temptation." Without doubt then art thou in the way of perfection when despite is to thee as a praising, poverty as riches, woe as wealth, so that thou suffer these gladly, and thou shalt not [fall] down from highness of soul.<sup>2</sup>

Flee with all thy might praising of men, for it is much commendable if thou be worthy for to be praised and thou art not praised of men. Tongues of glosers beguile many men, and lips of backbiters confound many men. Therefore thou shalt despise favour and worship and all the vain-joy, and thou shalt gladly suffer enmity and hate and backbiting; and so by slander and good fame, by tribulation

<sup>1</sup> James i. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin*, ut ista neque sustineas, et in nullo ab altitudine mentis cadas (De La Bigne).

## Of Patience

and glosing, thou shalt alway be going toward the bliss of heaven. Oft we fall by this way, but by oft falling we shall be learned how we shall stand. A stedfast man is not afear'd; a patient man is not sorry in adversity. Holy Writ saith, "Non conturbabit justum quicquid ei acciderit"<sup>1</sup>: "A rightful man shall not be dis-eased, whatever happeth him." And if thou be disposed in this wise, thou shalt overcome all temptations, thou shalt slake all malice, and tribulation shall be under thee, and so thou shalt lean and cleave upon Christ with all thine heart.

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xii 21.



## [CHAPTER VII]

### HOW THOU SHALT PRAY

WHEN thou art put in tribulation or temptation, anon thou shalt run to prayer; and if thou pray clearly and devoutly, thou shalt soon have help. Flutterings of the heart, fleeing thoughts, ravish soon a soul, that it may not stand stedfastly in prayer. And then it were good to a man to occupy him a while in meditation of ghostly things, till his thought were settled and stabled, and then to do his prayer.

Those men that have left all worldly occupations for the love of God, and given them to holy meditations and prayers, I trow by the grace of God within a little while they shall come to

## Of Prayer

the stedfastness of the soul for to pray and for to love, so that they shall not flee hither nor thither, but they shall rest in tranquillity and peace. It helpeth greatly for to get a stedfastness of the heart, a man for to give him to busy prayer, and for to sing devout psalms. By busy prayer we overcome the sleights and the wrenches of the devil; and the stronger we be in prayer, the feebler is he. Those men that give them busily to prayer, sometime they have sweetnesses, and while fervour lasteth and dwelleth, it is good that they pray still; and when that fervour ceaseth through frailty of flesh, then may they give them to meditation or to reading of Holy Writ, or to other good deeds, so that their thoughts flee not away from God. And so when they afterward arise for to pray, they shall then be more fervent in prayer than in fore time. Then we pray verily when that all our intention and our thoughts is lifted up to God, and our soul is burnt with the fire of the Holy

## The Mending of Life

**Ghost.** And then is the wonder goodness of God within us, when the inward marrow of our heart riseth up to the love of God, and all our prayer shall be then with good intent, that we shall overskip no words, but shall offer all the syllables of our prayer with a fervent desire up to our God.

When our heart is burnt with an hot love, then is our prayer burnt, and styeth up to our Lord with a sweet smell, as doth frankincense, and then it is great gladness and sweetness for to pray, and then when a man hath this wonderful sweetness in his prayer, then is his prayer turned into a song that is called in Latin "Jubileus."<sup>1</sup>

Here be those men reprov'd that give them more to meditation than to prayer. They know not that God's word is full of fire, and may purge the filth of sin. Also the souls of them that pray be inflamed with love, and though we may not bring

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. XII. *passim*.

## Of Prayer

our heart into stableness and sadness<sup>1</sup> of prayer soon as we will, yet shall we not leave off our prayer, but we shall waxen by little and little, and at the last Christ of His goodness will put our heart in stedfastness; and to this helpeth meditation, if it be reasonable and measurable.

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* stedfastness.

## [CHAPTER VIII]

### HOW THOU SHALT DO IN MEDITATIONS

'Tis a good meditation to think inwardly of Christ's Passion and His death,—how much pain He suffered for us wilfully in going, in preaching, in hunger and in thirst, in heat and in cold; how He suffered scorning and cursing, so that it be not heavy and grievous to the servant for to follow his God and his Emperor. Holy Writ saith thus, "Qui dicit in Christo manere debet sicut ille ambulavit et ille ambulare"<sup>1</sup>: "He that saith he woneth<sup>2</sup> and dwelleth in God, he must walk as Christ did." Christ said by the Prophet Jeremy: "Recordare pauper-

<sup>1</sup> 1 John ii. 6. *Vulg.*, et ipse ambulare.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. abideth. *Cf. German, wohnen.*

## Of Meditation

tatis mee et transgressionis absinthii"<sup>1</sup>:

"Have mind of my poverty, and my passing of wormwood." That is, Have mind how I passed into heaven by way of Passion that was bitter as wormwood.

Mind and meditation of these confoundeth the devil and destroyeth his engines<sup>2</sup>; it slaketh fleshly temptation; it bringeth a soul into the love of God; it lifteth up the heart, and maketh it more clear; and in that lifting, it purgeth it.

I trow that this meditation is most profitable to those that be newly turned to Christ. Here is put forth Christ's manhead, in the which a man hath matter to be glad and sorry; glad for the sickness of His Redemption, and sorry for the foulness of His Passion. A boistous<sup>3</sup> soul may not come to the sight and the knowing of the Godhead till

<sup>1</sup> Lam. iii. 19.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, machinas.*

<sup>3</sup> *i.e. rude, uncultivated. Latin, rudis et carnis animus.*

## The Mending of Life

be made spiritual by destroying of fleshly letting. When a man beginneth for to have a clean heart, so that none image of bodily thing may deceive him, then he shall be received for to know higher things, and then shall he joy in the love of the Godhead.

Some men's meditation is of the joy of holy Angels and holy souls that be with Christ; and this [be-]longeth to contemplation.

Other men's meditation is of the wretchedness of mankind, how foul it is; and they dispute in their thought how mad<sup>1</sup> those men be that forget heavenly joy for the vanity of this life.

Other men dispose their meditation thus: that all their desire soundeth nought else but the praising and the love of Christ; and no man may come to this manner of meditation, but if he will travail in these other; for this last is best of all, and maketh most a man

<sup>1</sup> *MS.*, wode.

## Of Meditation

to be contemplative. As there be divers workings and travails in chosen souls, so be there divers manners of meditation; but all come from one will, and run all to one end, and lead all to one blessedness, but by divers ways, and by one charity, the which is more in one man than in another. And therefore saith the Prophet: "Deduxit me super semitas justicie"<sup>1</sup>: "God led me by the paths and the ways of righteousness." As if he had said thus: There is one righteousness, but there be many ways thereof, whereby men be led to everlasting life.

Some men go by the lowest way to heavenward, some by the middle way, and some by the highest way. He goeth in the highest way that hath most love of God by goodness and by the free gift of God; not for [that] he travaileth more than other men, nor for [that] he giveth more alms, nor for [that] he suffereth

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxiii. 3 (Vulg. xxii.).



## The Mending of Life

more diseases, but for that he loveth more,—which love is a fervour and sweetness, and it desireth rest. No man may put himself in one of these ways; but a man taketh the way the which God chooseth him. Some time those that to our sight be in the highest way be in the lowest way, and those that to us seemeth in the lowest way be in the highest.

To be in these ways [be-]longeth only to the soul that is known of God, and not to outward deeds that be known of man. After the dispositions of meditations and of affections be men made able to the one way or to the other. But a man may not know by the outward deeds who is higher in the sight of God, and who is lower. It is a great folly a man for to deem and say, This man is better than this; this is worthy more meed of God than this; for there knoweth no man, but God, their souls and their hearts, which if they knew, then might

## Of Meditation

they well deem. And therefore God would that this should be hid from man, for if it were known, some should be too much worshipped, and some too much despised. If men might know other men's souls, they should despise many that now seem holy, and they should worship as angels some that they set little by now. All good thoughts and meditations come of God. /He giveth by His grace to all good men such meditations as He seeth that accordeth best to their estate and their degree. I may tell thee my meditations, but which be most profitable to thee I cannot tell, because I saw never thine inward affection nor thy love. I trow that those meditations that thou hast most please God and be most profitable for thy soul that God Himself of His grace putteth in thy soul. Yet mayest thou have a beginning of other men's sayings, as I have myself. If thou despise the teaching of doctors, and thou hopest for to

## The Mending of Life

find up in <sup>1</sup> thyself better thing than they taught in their books, where thou wilt, thou shalt not then taste the love of Christ. An unwise man saith thus,—God teacheth these doctors; why should He not as well teach me? I answer,—For [that] thou art not such as they were. Thou art proud and stern: they were meek and mild; and they said nothing of God by presumption, but they meeked themselves, and so they received holy knowing. Also God teacheth them that we should be taught in their books. If thy meditations desire the love of Christ, or if they sound in the praising of Him, as to my doom thou art well disposed. Those meditations by the which thou feelest most sweetness and softness in God be most profitable for thee.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *MS.*, *uppyn.*

<sup>2</sup> *So Hilton*, "Scale of Perfection" (edit. 1908), p. 68.

## [CHAPTER IX]

### HOW THOU SHALT HAVE THEE IN READING

IF thou covetest for to come to the love of God, and to be burnt with the desire of joys of heaven, and to be led to the despising of worldly things, be not slow nor negligent for to think good thoughts, nor for to read Holy Scripture, and namely<sup>1</sup> in the places where it stirreth a man to good manners,<sup>2</sup> and where it teacheth to know the sleights of the devil; where it speaketh of the love of God and of the contemplative life. I leave hard matters of Holy Writ to wise men that have studied long time therein. Holy reading helpeth us much for to

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* especially

<sup>2</sup> *Latin, morea.*

## The Mending of Life

profit in goodness. By reading in Holy Writ we know our defaults and our good living.<sup>1</sup> We know thereby in which we sin, and in which we sin not ; and what we should do, and what we should leave. By reading of Holy Writ those subtlest engines and sleights of the enemy be shewed to us ; our hearts be kindled and fired with love, and they be stirred to compunction and weeping. Such reading is good and to us a delicate feast, if we do it for to know how we shall please God and love Him, and not for covetise and worship nor favour of men, but for to rule ourselves and teach our even-Christians. We should not be held wise before men, but we should rather hide our cunning<sup>2</sup> than shew it for to have praising ; as the Prophet saith : " In corde meo abscondi eloquia tua ut non peccem tibi " <sup>2</sup> : " Lord God, I hide the cunning <sup>3</sup> the which I had

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, defectus nostros et profectus.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ps. cxix. 11 (Vulg. cxviii.).*

<sup>3</sup> *i.e. knowledge.*

## Of Reading

of Thee in my heart, that I should not sin against Thee."

The cause of our speech shall be only the praising of God and edification of our even-Christian, that it may be up-raised of us that the Prophet saith: "Semper laus ejus in ore meo"<sup>1</sup>: "The praising of God shall alway be in my mouth." And so it is when we seek not praising of ourselves, nor we speak nothing against the praising of God.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. xxxiv. 1 (Vulg. xxxiii.)

## [CHAPTER X]

### OF CLEANNESSE OF HEART

By these nine degrees that I have touched we stye up to purity and cleanness of the soul, by the which God is known. I speak of the cleanness of soul that may be had here. How might perfect cleanness be gotten here, where a man is so oft defouled with venial sins? Holy men's feet should be washed, for powder of the earth cleaveth unto them. As if he said, Be a man never so holy here, yet hath he venial sins, and of the most he shall be washed. Holy Writ saith thus: "Quis enim potest dicere, Purus sum a peccato?"<sup>1</sup> "What man may say of himself, I am clean from sin?" As who saith, None in this life. Job saith

<sup>1</sup> Prov. xx. 9.

## Of Purity of Mind

thus: "Si lotus fuero [quasi] aquis nivis, et effulserint velut [mundissime] manus mee, [propter innocentie opera, tamen] sordibus tu intingis me, et abhominabuntur[me]vestimenta mea"<sup>1</sup>: "Though I be washed with water of snow (that is, by penance and contrition), though my hands be wonder clean by innocent deeds, yet shalt Thou touch me with filth (that is, yet shall I seem foul in the sight of my Lord God for my venial sins), and for my clothes shall be abominable and loathsome (that is, my self flesh<sup>2</sup> that is frail and ready to fall maketh me to fall in venial sins, and it maketh me loathsome to Thee)." What cleanness may a man have in this life? Forsooth, full great cleanness, if he travail well in holy reading, prayer and meditation.

<sup>1</sup> Job. ix. 30, 31. •The words in square brackets are not in the M.S., but are added from the Speculum edition.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. my flesh itself



## The Mending of Life

Though a man sin sometime venially,  
yet for his holy intention to Godward his  
sin is forgiven him.

The fervour . . .<sup>1</sup> . . . of charity that [is]  
in such a good man destroyeth and  
consumeth the rust of venial sin, as [if] a  
drop of water were cast in an hot furnace  
or main oven.<sup>2</sup> The virtue of a cleansed  
and a purged soul is to have his inten-  
tion and his thought to Godward. In a  
clean conscience there is nothing bitter,  
nothing sharp, nothing hard; but all-  
thing is soft and sweet.

Out of cleanness of heart spring songs  
of joy, well-sounding gests<sup>3</sup> and merry  
melody; and sometimes to such a clean  
soul a wonder gladness that may not be

<sup>1</sup> See detached note on following page. Our manu-  
script, *Ff. v. 40, fol. 26<sup>b</sup>*, reads, . . . "The fervour and  
the longer it liveth thus," etc., and inserts here a  
large section from Chapter XI., page 71 to 78. The  
passage has in this present edition been removed  
from Chapter X., and replaced in its proper position  
in Chapter XI.

<sup>2</sup> *MS.*, man houyn.

<sup>3</sup> *Latin*, carmen dulcisonum.

## Of Purity of Mind

told is given of God, and it is as it were a song of heaven. / He that is in such a state may know himself in charity, yea in such charity that he shall never lose. And yet liveth not such a man without great dread; not dread of pain, but he dreadeth for to grieve his God. I cease to speak further in this matter, for I know myself a wretch<sup>1</sup>; oft my flesh is tormented and tempered and tempted.

<sup>1</sup> *Latin miser mihi videtur.*

*Detached note, see p. 62, note 1.*

An inexplicable, but not quite inextricable, confusion has arisen here in MS. F. The copyist seems to have transplanted from his original a large section from Chapter XI, as noted on pages 71 and 78, and inserted it in Chapter X, at the point indicated by dots on page 62. It would almost seem as if two or three folios had become detached, and then been bound up in a wrong place. In any case the result was to make nonsense of the transitional sentences, and to spoil the course of the teaching on "Love" in Chapter XI.

The editor had the choice of two courses. - (1) He might print the text of MS. F., exactly as it stands, and direct the reader by footnotes how to find for himself the true order of the original

## The Mending of Life

treatise ;—but this would have been unnecessarily confusing.

Or (2) he might rearrange the two chapters in accordance with the other MSS. and with the printed editions, indicating the dislocations in the MS. by footnotes. This is the alternative which he has chosen, wishing to present the teaching of Rolle in the form which would be most convenient to the reader.

## [CHAPTER XI]

### HOW WE SHALL LOVE GOD

<sup>1</sup> "Thou sweet, delicious Light, my God, my Maker, make bright the light of mine inward eyes, that my soul, being made clean from all filths, may swiftly flee up on to the height of Thy love, that I may sit and rest in thee, Jesu; <sup>2</sup> singing and joying <sup>3</sup> in heavenly sweetness, <sup>3</sup> as it were ravished <sup>3</sup> unto the stable light of ghostly things, so that I have no delight nor liking but in Thee.

"O Thou everlasting Love, inflame and in-fire my soul to the love of God,

<sup>1</sup> The passage put here in inverted commas seems to be a sort of pattern "Meditation," given by Rolle for readers to copy.

<sup>2</sup> . . . <sup>2</sup> *Latin, jubilans.*

<sup>3</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> *Latin, quasi raptus.*

## The Mending of Life

<sup>1</sup> that in nothing it have liking but in the clipping and halsing of Him <sup>1</sup>!

"O Thou good Jesu, who shall give me to feel thee here, for here Thou mayest be feeled and not seen? Good Jesu, put Thyself within the bowels of my soul; come into my heart and fulfil it with Thy sweetness; make drunk my soul with the strong wine of Thy well-sounding love, that I may forget all wickedness, <sup>2</sup> and that I may only clip Thee and halse Thee, <sup>2</sup> and sing and wax glad in Thee, my Lord Jesu!

"O my sweetest Lord, pass not from me, for only Thy presence is my solace, and only Thine absence is my sorrow. <sup>3</sup>

"O Thou Holy Ghost, come in to me, and ravish me to Thee whom Thou madest! Change me with Thy sweet

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup> *Latin*, ut non ardeat nisi ad amplexus ejus.

<sup>2</sup> . . . <sup>2</sup> *Latin*, ac te solum complectens.

<sup>3</sup> See "Imitation," Book II. chap. viii., "Of Familiar Friendship with Jesus," written nearly a century later than Rolle.

## Of Love of God

gifts, that I, <sup>1</sup>gladdened in Thy delicate joy,<sup>1</sup> may despise and cast away all worldly things. Make me to receive Thy ghostly gifts, that I [be] lifted up into Thy light by heavenly songs, and that all my heart melt in Thine holy love. Burn with Thine holy fire mine ears and mine heart, and do [Thou] them alway burn upon Thine altar.

"Come, I beseech Thee, Thou soft, very joy! Come, my sweeting,<sup>2</sup> most desired of all things! Come to me, my life, my solace, my comfort, for my soul mourneth and is sick for Thy love! Burn mine heart within with heat, make me clear inward with Thy light, and feed me with the milk-sweet song of Thy love!"<sup>3</sup>

Thou shalt delight thee in these meditations and other such, that thou may

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup> So Rolle's "Prose Psalter" on Ps. xlv. 4, "gladdis in gastly joy the cite of god," referring there also to the Holy Ghost.

<sup>2</sup> Latin, *dilecte mi*.

<sup>3</sup> See note 1, p. 65.

## The Mending of Life

stye up afterward to the inly marrow of God's love. It suffereth not a soul to rest in himself, but it ravisheth it from himself to that it loveth; and so the soul is more where it loveth than in the body where it feeleth and liveth.

There be three degrees of the love of Christ, in the which he that is chosen to love styeth up from one of them to the other.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>2</sup>The first is called the degree that may not be overcome; the second degree is that may not be departed; and the third is a singular degree.<sup>2</sup>

[i.] Then is love in the first degree when it may not be overcome with other loves, but casteth away gladly all things that should let it. It slaketh all fleshly desires, and it suffereth patiently all manner of dis-ease for Christ's love. All

<sup>1</sup> For detached note on the "three degrees of love," see end of chapter.

<sup>2</sup> . . . <sup>2</sup> Latin, *Primus vocatur insuperabilis, secundus inseparabilis, et tertius singularis.*

## Of Love of God

manner travail is light to a lover, and travail may not be better overcome than by love.

[ii.] Then is love in the second degree when a soul is wonderly burnt in love, so that it leaneth and cleaveth upon Christ with a stedfast thought that it may not be departed from Him. It suffereth Him not to be a moment out of mind, but it bindeth Him so to it as with a rope. It desireth to be bound in His love that the fetters of deadly kind<sup>1</sup> might be broken, that it might see Him clearly Whom it loveth and desireth; and he that is in this degree worshippingeth and loveth this name Jesu so much that it resteth alway in his heart and in his soul.

When the love of Christ is so weighed<sup>2</sup> in God's darlings that it may not be

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* mortal nature.

<sup>2</sup> *MS.*, weyde: possibly, wide *Latin*, Cum . amor Christi in corde dilectionis dei . . in tantum exercuerit.



## The Mending of Life

overcome of any other love, and when this love cleaveth and leaneth so up to Christ that it forgetteth Him not, then is it called undepartable and everlasting love. What love may be more than this, since this is highest?

[iii.] Yet there is the third degree of love that is cleped singular and only love. It is one thing for to be highest, and another thing for to be only. If it be so that thou seekest solace or comfort in any other thing than in the love of God, though it be so that thou love Him most of all things, yet is not thy love singular and only to Him. Then is love singular when it excludeth and putteth away all manner of solace but only of Jesu. A soul that is in this degree only loveth Jesu, only thirsteth Him, only desireth Him. It is burnt in Him, it resteth only in Him: nothing is sweet to it but if it be savoured with Jesu.

The mind of Jesu to such a soul is as

## Of Love of God

a merry song and as wine in a feast. All other thing that proffereth<sup>1</sup> to such a soui, if it accord not with this love and this desire, is anon cast away and despised. It despiseth all earthly things for Christ's love; and all-thing that it doth is unsavoury and loathsome but if Christ be the end. Without Christ all things be foul and all things be griefful<sup>2</sup>; and so such a soul troweth for to come to the perfect sight of God in heaven. Therefore it standeth stedfastly in love; it falleth not in heart nor in soul; it suffereth all dis-eases gladly. . . . And the longer it liveth thus, the higher it is made, and the more it is burnt in the love of God. To such a soul that loveth Christ singular a desert and a wilderness were a good place, for it coveteth no

<sup>1</sup> *MS.*, proued. *Latin*, quicquid ultro se offerat.

<sup>2</sup> *MS.*, grefful. *Latin*, sordescunt

<sup>3</sup> The passage printed from here to p. 78 is given in this *MS.* in Chapter X., but is placed here in its proper position. See note on p. 62.

## The Mending of Life

company of men, and the more it should be ravished into inward joys, the less it were letted with outward travails. A soul in this degree is made as it were impossible that no dis-ease grieveth it, for it joyeth so in God that it feeleth no mischief. O my soul, leave thou the love of the world! Put thee all in the love of Christ, that alway it be to thee sweet and soft for to speak of Him, to read, to write, to think on Him, and to pray and to praise Him! O my soul, God desireth for to see thee; He crieth from far to thee; He burneth in thee; He mourneth in thy love.<sup>1</sup>

O thou excellent love of Christ, thou hast overcome me!

O thou everlasting fairness, thou hast wounded my heart; scarcely<sup>2</sup> I live for joy, and almost I die, for I may not in my deadly flesh suffer such a sweetness of this great majesty! An heart that is

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, amore tuo languet.*

<sup>2</sup> *MS., unnethes.*

## Of Love of God

all fixed in the love of God Jesu<sup>1</sup> is all turned into burning love; and so it changeth all into a new shape. Therefore, Thou good Jesu,<sup>2</sup> have mercy on me wretch<sup>3</sup>; shew Thyself to me that mourneth, and heal me that am thus wounded; for I feel no sickness but the wound of Thy love. He that loveth not Thee loseth all that he hath, and he that followeth not Thee is mad.<sup>4</sup> Lord Jesu, be Thou to me love, joy, and desire, till that I see the God of Gods in Sion, that is, in the bliss of heaven.

Charity of all virtues is noblest, excellentest and sweetest, which that knitteth the lover to Him that he loveth, and it bindeth Christ to a chosen soul; it reformeth and maketh again in us the image and the likeness of the high Trinity; and it maketh a creature wonder like to God. Oh, the gift of

<sup>1</sup> or perhaps good Jesu, as below.

<sup>2</sup> . . . <sup>3</sup> Latin, *miserere miseri*. Compare, "Have mercy upon us, miserable sinners."

<sup>4</sup> MS., *wode*.

## The Mending of Life

love, how much worth it is, that lengtheneth the highest degree that angels have ; for the more love that a man hath in this world, the higher he shall be in the bliss of heaven !

O thou singular joy of everlasting love, thou bindest those that be thine with bonds of virtue, and thou drawest them to heavenward above all earthly things ; thou enterest and goest in boldly to God's privy chamber ; thou alone art not ashamed to ravish Christ. He it is Whom thou seekest, Whom thou lovest ; thy Christ is Jesu ; hold Him fast, for it may not be but that thou receive Him to Whom thou hast been obedient.

O thou charity, no works please without thee ; thou makest all things savoury ; thou art an heavenly seat ; thou art fellow to angels ; thou art a wonder holiness ; thou art a blessed sight ; thou art life without end.

O thou holy charity, how sweet, how comfortable art thou ! Thou makest

## Of Love of God

whole broken things; thou makest a bondman free; thou makest men even to angels; thou liftest up men that be in rest; and when they be lifted, thou givest them great sweetness. <sup>1</sup>In this degree of love is love holy, chaste, voluntary; loving Him that is loved for Himself and not for His <sup>1</sup>; and it fixeth him <sup>2</sup> all in Him that is loved, and seeketh nothing but Him. It is content with Him; it bindeth Him to itself strongly; it hath

<sup>1</sup>. . . <sup>1</sup> The copyist of the MS. seems here to have fallen into confusion: he writes, "In this degre of loue is an holy man chast wilful loue that loueth hym that is loued for hymself and nouth for his." The Speculum edition reads: "In hoc statu vel gradu amoris est amor castus sanctus voluntarius amatum pro seipso non pro suis amans."—See Misyn, p. 125, line 28. There is a striking parallel in Rolle's commentary in his Prose Psalter on Ps. liii. 6, p. 193. The dialect is Northern, and quite different from that of MS. F. "6 *Voluntaria sacrificabo tibi*. . .  
<sup>2</sup> Wilfully .i. offire, for that .i. loue .i. lu. for itselfe, noght for othere thyng. and swa .i. offire til the wilfully louynge .i. lu. and the and louand the . for the, noght for thin," *i. e.* "loving Thee and lauding Thee for Thyself, not for what is Thine."

<sup>2</sup> *i. e.* itself.

## The Mending of Life

in himself no measure, but it [is] lift with a great fire in Him that it loveth. It despiseth and forbiddeth all other things; it joyeth in Christ alway; it thinketh and hath mind upon Him; it styeth up in His desire; it falleth down in clipping and in kissing of Him; it is all molten in the fire of His love.

Christ's very<sup>1</sup> lover wouldeth none of measure in his loving, for whatever fervour or joy that he hath here in the love of God, yet he desireth more and more for to love Him; and though he might love here, he would not stand still in one degree of love, but he would profit therein alway more and more; and the longer he loved, the more he would burn in love.

God is of endless might and goodness: His sweetness may not be told nor thought, nor it may not be comprehended nor all received of a creature. When a soul beginneth for to be burnt in the

<sup>1</sup> i.e. true.

## Of Love of God

desire of God, it receiveth some-deal<sup>1</sup> of His light, and furthermore it is so inspired with the gifts of the Holy Ghost that it hath here some-deal<sup>1</sup> of heavenly joy, as a deadly thing may have. It passeth all bodily things, and it is lift to the sweetness of everlasting life; and when it is thus touched with sweetness of the God-head, and heat thereof and light, then it is offered up to God as a sacrifice that was called *Holocaustum*,—the which was all burnt. A strong, sweet love, ravishing and burning, wilful and unfleschable,<sup>2</sup> draweth all the soul into the service of Christ, and it suffereth it to think upon nothing but upon Him.

Jesu Christ shall be the beginning of our love, Whom we shall love for Himself; and shall be the end of our love, for other things that we love shall be

<sup>1</sup> ...<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* some share; as in modern use, "a good deal."

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* spontaneous and unquenchable. *Latin*, *spontaneus, inextinguibilis*.



## The Mending of Life

beloved for Him. Then is the love perfect, when the intention of the soul, and all the privy workings of the body, is lifted into the love of God, so that the strength of that love is so much, the joy thereof is so great, that no worldly joy, no fleshly thing liketh, though it be lawful.

O thou undepartable love! O thou singular love, which that no tormentry of wicked men may overcome! He that hath thee would rather suffer pain which passeth man's mind than he would sin deadly. If thou lovest thus, then lovest thou God well, and nought else but Him; nor thyself but for Him; and then is there nothing in thee but that is loved of God. O thou clear charity . . . ! . . . come in to me, and I to thee, that I may be presented before my Maker. Forsooth thou art a noble savour, thou art odour well-smelling, thou art a pleasant

<sup>1</sup> Here the misplaced passage ends. See notes on pages 62, 63, and 71.

## Of Love of God

sweetness. Thou art heat that cleanseth, thou art solace everlasting, thou makest men to be contemplative; thou openest heaven gates, thou shuttest the mouths of them that accuseth. Thou makest God to be seen, thou hidest the multitude of sins. We praise thee, we preach thee, whereby we overcome the world, whereby we stye up the ladder of heaven. Fall thou down to me. To thee I commend and give me and mine ever withouten end.

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### *Detached Note.*

The student may like to have here references to other places where Rolle details the "three degrees of love."

(1) "The Form of Perfect Living," chapter viii. (Horstman, Book 1, pp. 31-34; see Miss Geraldine E. Hodgson's version, pp. 46-52).

(2) "Ego dormio" (Horstman, Book 1, pp. 52-59).

(3) "The Commandment of Love to God" (Horstman, Book 1, pp. 62, 63).

(4) In Wynkyn de Worde's edition of "Contemplations of the dread and love of God," published in 1506, and attributed by him, wrongly, to Richard Rolle, the writer quotes, one after the other, two of these accounts, those numbered here (1) and (2).

## The Mending of Life

It is possible here to note a parallel between Rolle's "three degrees" (*gradus*, steps, stages) and the normal three stages of the Mystical Ascent. This is most clearly seen in the account of them in the Treatise, or Epistle, "Ego dormio." The Insuperable degree seems equivalent to the Purificative, the Inseparable to the Illuminative, and the Singular to the Unitive. The student would find it of interest to compare the three accounts given in Horstman's first volume with that in the chapter above.

## [CHAPTER XII]

### HOW WE SHALL HAVE US IN CONTEMPLATION

LIFE contemplative hath three parts: they be,—reading of Holy Writ, prayer, and meditation. In our reading angels come down to us, and teach us, that we err not. In our prayers angels stye up, and offer our prayer before God, thanking God of our profit. And so they be messengers betwixt God and us. Prayer is nought else but a meek love and affection ordained to Godward. Meditation in God and in ghostly things shall be taken after reading and prayer; and there is the clipping of Rachel.<sup>1</sup>

To reading belongeth reason and

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, amplexus Rachelis. See detached note at end of chapter.*

## The Mending of Life

seeking of truth, which is the light of a soul. To prayer belongeth praising, beholding, passing of thought, and wondering; and so in prayer is contemplative life. It is hard to tell what is contemplation. [Some say contemplative life] is nought else but a knowing of things that be to come, which be now hidden; or a resting from all occupations worldly; or a study in Holy Scripture. Other men say that contemplation is a clear, free sight, lifted up with wondering. Other men say, and well, that contemplation is an heavenly song that is called "Jubilus." Some men say, and best of all, that contemplation is a death of fleshly love, wrought by this heavenly song in a soul that is up-raised.

Me thinketh that contemplation is this heavenly song of the love of God, which is called "Jubilus," taken of the sweetness of a soul by praising of God. This song is the end of perfect prayer and of the highest devotion that may be

## Of Contemplation of God

here. This gladness of soul is had of God, and it breaketh out in a ghostly voice well-sounding. And this is the most perfect deed that may be done with voice. The Prophet saith thus: "Beatus vir qui scit jubilationem"<sup>1</sup>: "Blessed is that man that can sing this heavenly song" in the contemplation of God.

He that is an alien from God may not sing this song in Jesu, nor he may not taste the sweetness of this love.

He that alway mourneth and longeth here in the fire of everlasting love, and coveteth to live here in patience, meekness and mildness, in cleanness of body and of soul, and so with ghostly ointments made soft desireth for to come to contemplation, let him seek here good virtues, whereby he may put from him

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxxix. 15. See comment in Rolle's "Psalter," Bramley's Edition, p. 321, on Ps. lxxxviii. 15, as numbered in Vulgate: "blisful is the folk that wate ioynge: that is, that kan offere ioyngis til the in a wondre ioy of brennand deuocioun."

## The Mending of Life

mischief in this life, and afterward come to the bliss of heaven, and so in this exile and wilderness he shall get the heavenly song of the love of God.

A man shall not be slow to give himself to prayer and waking and to holy meditations, for by such ghostly travails and sighing and weeping and inward compunction, Christ's love is kindled in a soul, and all good virtues and gifts of the Holy Ghost be put in a soul. Let a man begin this love with wilful poverty,<sup>1</sup> and so when he coveteth nothing in this world, he shall live soberly and meekly and justly before God and man.

For to have something<sup>2</sup> sometime it is needful; but for to will to have nothing it is a great virtue.

We may have much good, and we

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. III.

<sup>2</sup> The Latin editions read, nihil, and *Misyn*, nothing to have is sometime of need. The contrast seems to be between compulsory and voluntary poverty.

## Of Contemplation of God

may have therewith will to have none good, and that is when the good that we have we hold <sup>1</sup>not to our lust and liking, but our need.<sup>1</sup>

Every perfect man must needs take the things that he needeth; else were he no perfect man but if he would take things whereby he should live.

The world shall be had of a perfect man as if he despised all things that is therein for God's sake; and yet he shall take thereof meat and drink and clothing. And if sometime they want him,<sup>2</sup> he shall not grutch, but he shall thank God thereof. But the excess and the superfluity thereof that needeth not to a man shall be cast away.

The more a man be burnt within with the heat of everlasting life, the more patient shall he be in his adversity and his mischief. That man is meek and feigneth not, that hath despised of him-

<sup>1</sup> . . . <sup>1</sup> *Latin. non ad voluptatem, sed necessitatem.*

<sup>2</sup> *i.e.* are lacking to him.



## The Mending of Life

self and set little by himself, and is not stirred to wrath with shame nor adversity. Such a man giveth him busily to meditation, and he straineth him for to come to contemplation of heavenly things; and when his inward sight is purged as much as the flesh suffereth, then singeth he within heavenly songs of joy. And so when he busieth him not for to seek outward things, nor he goeth no whither with a proud foot, but he is gladdened in ghostly riches, then is he ravished in a sweetness of love as in swooning<sup>1</sup>; and in that ravishing he is wonderly glad. Such is contemplative life, if it be well taken. By long ghostly travail we should arise to contemplation of heavenly things; and so the ghostly eye is lifted up into the sight of ghostly things. But this sight is not clear, for the while we live here, we see by our own, faith as by a

<sup>1</sup> Latin, *quasi in extasi*.—For Rolle's teaching on "Ravishing," or *ecstasy*, see "*Fire of Love*," *Miagyn's translation*, E. E. T. S., pp. 84-87.

## Of Contemplation of God

mirror.<sup>1</sup> Though the eye of understanding busy itself for to profit in ghostly sight, yet it may not see that light as it is; but it hath a feeling thereof, since it keepeth and holdeth the savour and the fervour thereof.

Though it be so that the mirkness<sup>2</sup> of sin be put away from a soul, and though it be purged and lighted ghostly, yet all the while that it liveth in a deadly flesh, the wonderly joy may not perfectly [be] seen.

Holy contemplative men sometime see the joy<sup>3</sup> of God<sup>4</sup>; and that is when the understanding of Holy Writ is showed unto them,<sup>5</sup> or else when the door of heaven is opened to them,<sup>6</sup> and all obstacles and lettings betwixt God and their soul be put away, so that they may with a clear eye of the heart see citizens

<sup>1</sup> See 2 Cor. v. 6, and 1 Cor. xiii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Latin, tenebre.

<sup>3</sup> Latin, gloriam.

<sup>4</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18

<sup>5</sup> Luke xxiv. 45.

<sup>6</sup> Rev. iv. 1.

## The Mending of Life

of heaven.<sup>1</sup> Some men have these twain sights. As when we stand in mirkness we see nothing, so sometime in contemplation, when a soul is lighted with ghostly light, it seeth no light. Holy Writ saith of Christ: "Posuit tenebras latibulum suum"<sup>2</sup>; "Christ hideth Him to us in mirkness," and "He speaketh to us in a cloud"<sup>3</sup>; and though that light may not be *seen* here, yet there is *felt* a delicious thing in that ghostly sight. Then is love perfect, when a man that liveth in cleanness cannot joy but in God, nor he will nothing but God and for God. Here may you see that holiness is not in the grounding<sup>4</sup> of the heart, nor in weeping, nor in outward

<sup>1</sup> *Latin, celestes cives*. See Rev. iv. *passim*.

<sup>2</sup> Ps. xviii. 11. "He made darkness His hiding place," R. V.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. xcix. 7. "He spake unto them in the pillar of cloud," R. V.

<sup>4</sup> *Latin, rugitu cordis*. Perhaps, grinding of the heart, as St Jerome used to grind his heart with a rough stone, to subdue the flesh.

## Of Contemplation of God

deeds, but it is in sweetness of perfect charity and by contemplation.

Many have been molten in weeping and tears, and afterward they have fallen in deadly sin; but no man that hath had the very joy of everlasting love hath afterward been defouled with worldly businesses.

It [be-]longeth to those that be newly turned to God for to sigh sore and weep; and it [be-]longeth to perfect men to arise in contemplation and to sing heavenly songs.

Though a man have done long penance and wept long time for his sins, yet if he feel biting in his conscience for his sin, know he well that he hath not yet fulfilled perfect penance therefore. Yet let weeping be his bread night and day, for but if he punish himself with sore sighing and weeping, he shall not mowe<sup>1</sup> come to the sweetness of contemplation.

<sup>1</sup> i.e. be able to.

## The Mending of Life

The softness of contemplation may not be gotten without great travail ; and with a wonder joy it is had ; and it is not man's merit nor his service, but it is the gift of God. And yet from the beginning of the world hitherto there was no man ravished in contemplation of everlasting love, but that had first left perfectly all the vanity of the world. And yet is this not enough, but he must furthermore travail himself in holy meditation and devout prayer, ere he come to very contemplation. Contemplation is travailous, but it is sweet, delicate and soft, and it gladdeth him that travaileth therein, and grieveth him not.

No man may have it but in great joy : and he is not weary when it cometh, but when it passeth from him. A good travail is this, a wonder working is this, that a man may better do sitting than standing. He must have a great rest in body and in soul whom fire of the Holy Ghost verily burneth.

## Of Contemplation of God

Many be that cannot keep holyday<sup>1</sup> in their soul, nor they cannot put away idle thoughts.

Those that sing with their mouth, and their soul fleeth about,<sup>2</sup> they be not worthy for to see how sweet is the height of contemplation.

Every contemplative man loveth for to be solitary, and so the less that he were letted, the more fervently and the oftter he might give him to ghostly travail.

Since it is known that contemplative life is more worthy and more meritorious than the active life, and all contemplative men by the inward stirring of God love for to be solitary, for to have more sweetness and fervour in contemplation, then follows it that solitary men upraised

<sup>1</sup> *Latin*, *sabatizare*.

<sup>2</sup> *Latin*, *Vacantes corpore, sed vagantes corde*. Cf. "Ego dormio": "What gude hopes . . . if thou lat thi tonge blaber on the boke, and thi hert ren abowte in sere stedes in the worlde?" *Herstman*, i. 55.

## The Mending of Life

by the gift of contemplation, be best men and have most perfection. And some men be in that perfection, and some men be in that degree, that notwithstanding that they be in the height of contemplative life, yet therewith they fulfil the office of preaching. Such men pass the men that give them only to ghostly occupation and not to the need of their even-Christians, in this that they shall have the aureole, that is, a crown for their preaching.

A very<sup>1</sup> contemplative man is fixed with so great desire in that heavenly light that may not be seen, that oft he seemeth as he were a fool and witless in men's sight; and that is for his soul is so inflamed and fired in the love of Christ, that he hath changed his bodily taste, and is departed from all earthly works, and when a soul hath thus gathered himself in the sweetness of everlasting love, it keepeth itself alway

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* truly.

## Of Contemplation of God

inward, that it seeketh no delight in bodily things.

And for [that] it is delicately fed in ghostly delights, what wonder is it though it cry and say thus to Christ: "O my Brother, who shall give Thee to me, that I may find thee without and kiss thee?"<sup>1</sup> that is, that I may be unkind from my flesh,<sup>2</sup> and then find Thee, and seeing Thee face to face, that I may always be knit to Thee.

\* A devout soul, given to contemplative life, and fulfilled with ghostly love, it despiseth all the vain joy of the world, and only joying and singing in Jesu, it desireth for to be departed from the body; and for [that] such a soul is despised of worldly men that savour not heavenly things, therefore it mourneth in love, and it desireth greatly that it might rest, and be with the choir of

<sup>1</sup> Cant. viii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> or, unnatural to my flesh. *Latin*, id est, soluta carne te invenire merear.



## The Mending of Life

angels in heaven and in delicate joy. There is nothing more profitable here, nor more joyful, than is the grace of contemplation, the which lifteth us from low things, and presenteth us to God. What thing is grace but a beginning of joy? What is the perfection of joy but a grace in the which is kept to us a joyful blessedness, and a blessed joy; and everlasting[-ness] that is joyful, and joy everlasting;<sup>1</sup> with saints for to live, with angels for to dwell; above all these, for to see God, to know God, and perfectly to love Him; to see the great light of His Majesty, and with one high, heavenly

<sup>1</sup> *The translation here is somewhat confused, and does not well represent the neat antitheses of the Latin, which reads as follows (La Bigne edition):* Quid est enim gratia, nisi inchoatio gloriae? Et quid est perfectio gloriae, nisi gratia consummata, in qua conservantur nobis jucunda felicitas et felix jucunditas, gloriosa eternitas et eterna gloria? "For what is grace but a beginning of glory? And what is the perfection of glory but grace consummated, in which are kept for us a joyful happiness and a happy joyfulness, a glorious eternity and an eternal glory?"

## Of Contemplation of God

song and jubilation that may not be spoken, and with merry melody, ever for to praise Him! To Whom be honour and joy and thanks, evermore! Amen.

*Detached note: see page 81, note 1*

In medieval theology Rachel was type of the Higher or Contemplative life, as Leah was of the Lower or Active life. For further particulars see Rolles (?) "Epistle on Mixed Life" (Perry, E.E.T.S., 1866, No. 20, page 29; Herstman, Vol. 1, p. 274); Hilton's "Scale of Perfection" (Edition of 1908, p. 331); Dante's "Purgatorio" (Canto xxviii, lines 100-108). The teaching may be traced back to St Gregory.

## GLOSSARY

Charge of. Care for.	Manners. Customs,
Cleped. Called.	ways.
Clip. Clasp, embrace.	Meed. Reward.
Conable. Suitable.	Queymous. Squeamish.
Coveting. Desire.	Ravish. Carry away.
Covetise. Covetousness.	Ravishing ( <i>noun</i> ). Ec-
Deadly. Mortal, mor-	stasy, rapture.
tally.	Sicker, sickness. Cer-
Deem. Judge.	tain, certainty.
Defoul. Defile, tread	Slake. Quench.
down.	Sleights. Tricks, subtle-
Dis-ease. Distress, dis-	ties.
comfort, trouble.	Stounde. Hour. <i>Cf. Ger-</i>
Doom. Judgment.	<i>man</i> , Stunde.
Engines. Snares.	Stye. Mount. <i>Cf. Ger-</i>
Even-Christian. Fellow-	<i>man</i> , steigen.
Christian, neighbour.	Tell better by. Count as
<i>Latin</i> , proximus.	better.
Fructuous. Fruitful.	Tell nought by. Count
Gests. Lays, songs.	as nothing.
Glosing. Flattering.	Thews. Habits.
Grutch. Murmur, com-	Trow. Believe, think.
plain.	Unskilful. Unreasonable.
Halse. Embrace by the	Vain joy. Vainglory.
neck.	Wilful. Voluntary, spon-
Joy. Often used for	taneous.
glory.	Wit. Knowledge.
Keep ( <i>noun</i> ). Heed, care.	Worship. Honour, glory.
Leasing. Lying.	Wrenches. Deceits.
Let. Hinder.	Wretch. Wretched one.
Like ( <i>verb</i> ). Please.	<i>Latin</i> , miser.

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